

10¢
Canada 12¢

ARGOSY



APR. 12

WEEKLY

IS AMERICA
FACING
INVASION?

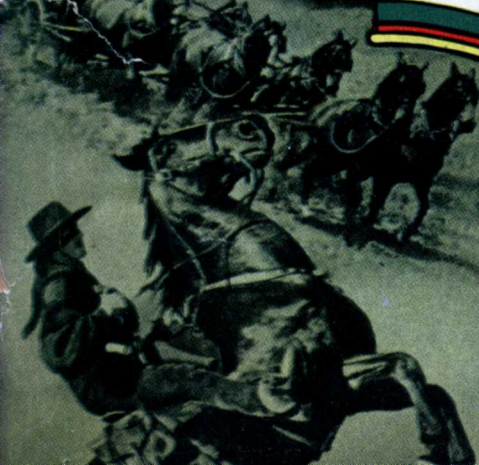
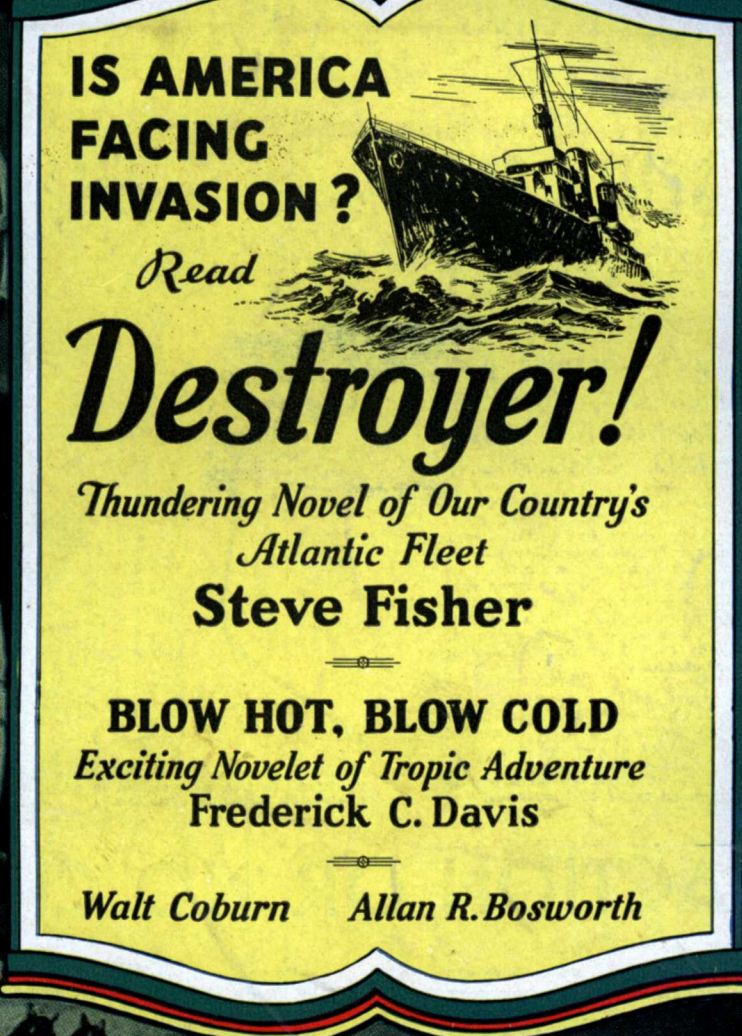
Read

Destroyer!

*Thundering Novel of Our Country's
Atlantic Fleet*
Steve Fisher

BLOW HOT, BLOW COLD
Exciting Novelet of Tropic Adventure
Frederick C. Davis

Walt Coburn Allan R. Bosworth



DON'T ENDURE CATARRH MISERY

NEW FOUR FOLD
METHOD ATTACKS
CATARRHAL SYMPTOMS
4 WAYS TO HELP BRING
QUICK, BLESSED RELIEF

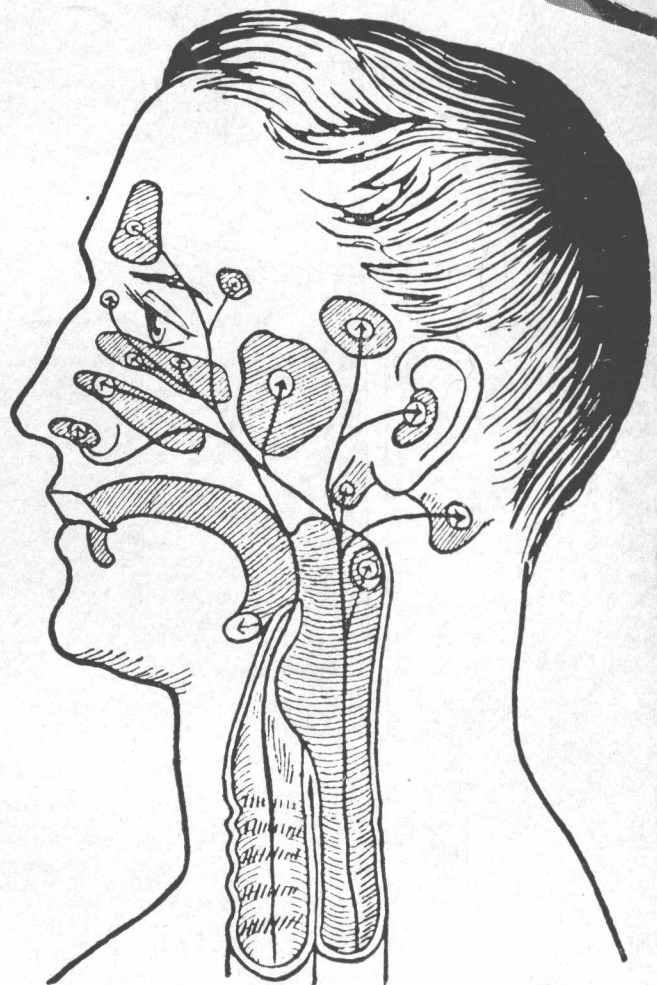
PAMPHLET SENT FREE

Here is a Free Offer that no reader of this magazine suffering the disagreeable annoying symptoms of Nasal Catarrh and Congestion can afford to ignore. Are any of these your troubles?

NASAL CATARRH, CLOGGED NOSTRILS, DIFFICULT BREATHING, HAWKING, BLOWING, SNUFFING, DULLED HEARING AND HEAD NOISES CAUSED BY NASAL CONGESTION?

Have you a "Catarrhal" Cough, Clogged Nostrils, Phlegm-filled Throat? Do you have head noises, or a buzzing and ringing in your ears? Is your hearing growing dull? Does your nose feel "stuffed up" or are you continually obliged to snuffle, spit, hawk and clear your throat? Is breathing through the nose often difficult? Have you frontal headaches? Do you catch cold easily and is there a chronic mucous discharge that makes frequent nose blowing an embarrassing necessity? Have you an offensive catarrhal breath? These are some of the common, easily noted symptoms that may be caused by Nasal Catarrh, and it may pay you to check them carefully.

If any of these symptoms are yours, this notice must surely cause you to write at once for 4 WAY PAMPHLET. It is free for the asking. This new Four Fold Method goes after Catarrhal Symptoms in four different ways instead of one to help clear accessible catarrhal accumulations right out of the head, throat and nasal passages. Thus it has brought quick, effective results that have already given joy and blessed relief to thousands.



Some of the shaded portions of this diagram show the "air spaces" of the head. Catarrh often collects in many of these places and causes the disagreeable Catarrhal Symptoms.

SATISFACTION OR NO CHARGE

Only a sufferer from catarrhal conditions as noted above can fully appreciate how great would be the joy if these symptoms were quickly and thoroughly cleared away. Here is your chance to learn about and try for yourself this highly successful method, developed and approved in England and now being introduced throughout America on "Satisfaction or No Charge" terms, which makes its trial by any catarrhal sufferer an easy matter. It costs nothing to find out about it beyond postage for your inquiry and if you have Catarrh trouble, by all means write at once to the Heather Company, Dept. 106-A, Adams, N. Y., for PAMPHLET with full particulars and directions. It does not obligate you to spend one penny for treatment. Do this at once while you are thinking about it for there is no assurance that this offer will ever be repeated in this magazine. So before you forget or lose the address, CUT OUT THIS COUPON AND MAIL IT TODAY.

Do you want a new joy of living? Then cut out the Coupon below and mail it today. It may open the pathway to your own prompt and gloriously welcome relief from the Catarrhal evils you know so well, just as it has done and is doing for a host of others.

-----FREE COUPON-----

The Heather Company, Dept. 106-A, Adams, N. Y.

Please send PAMPHLET with full information and directions for the Four Way Method.

NAME.....

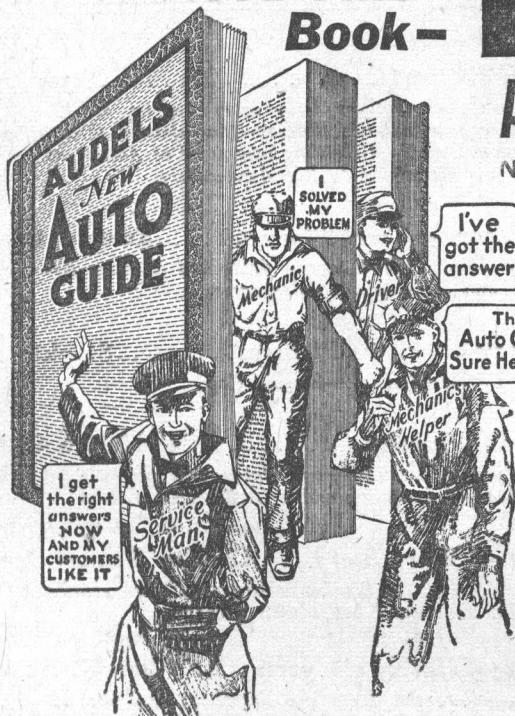
ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

PLEASE PRINT NAME IN BLOCK CAPITALS

MECHANICS

You Need This Book—



Know!

YOUR CAR

AUDELS NEW AUTO GUIDE

NEW FLUID DRIVE FULLY EXPLAINED

Aude's New Automobile Guide is New from Cover to Cover. Contains all you need to know about the 1. Construction, 2. Operation, 3. Service, 4. Repair of Modern Motor Cars, Trucks, Buses and Diesel Engines. It contains Practical Information in a Handy Form—1540 Pages—1540 Illustrations. Written by an engineering authority and presented with forceful directness in PLAIN LANGUAGE and SIMPLE TERMS, generously illustrated. It is an up-to-date authoritative Book of Complete Instructions for all service jobs giving a New Vision of the automotive field. Covers the Entire Subject in Every Detail. Does Not Deal in Idle Theories, but gives Definite Directions telling Exactly What To Do and How To Do It. It is Packed Full with Important Information. Indispensable to Auto Mechanics, Service Men and Owners.

INSIDE VIEWS OF AUTOMOBILE PARTS FULLY ILLUSTRATED

The contents is Progressively Arranged; thus making it a Text Book and a Reference Book, to which you will refer again and again. This book completely covers the Parts of an Automobile—Automotive Physics—The Gas Engine—How a Gas Engine Works—Gas Engine Principles—Multi-Cylinder Engines—Horse Power—Automobile Engines—Engines: Stationary Parts—Engines: Moving Parts—Pistons—Piston Rings—Connecting Rods—Crank Shafts—The Valves—The Valve Gear—Cams and Cam Action—Valve Timing—Cooling Systems—Gasoline—Fuel Feed Systems—The Mixture—Carburetors—Automatic Choke—Super Chargers—Transmissions—Synchro-Mesh—Clutches—Universals and Propeller Shafts—The Differential—Rear Axles—The Running Gear—Brakes—Wheel Alignment—Knee Action—Steering Gear—Tires—Lubricants and Lubrication—Automotive Electricity—Ignition Systems—Magneo Ignition—Spark Plugs—Ignition Coils—Distributors—Automatic Spark Control—Ignition Timing—Generators—Starters—Generator and Starter Testing—Lighting Systems—Storage Batteries—Battery Charging—Battery Testing Troubles.

The 1540 Illustrations in this book are photographs of modern cars and mechanical drawings giving details for guidance. They explain all working parts and their functions. Alphabetical Index lists 55 interesting and instructive chapters with many sub-chapters—a big time saver.

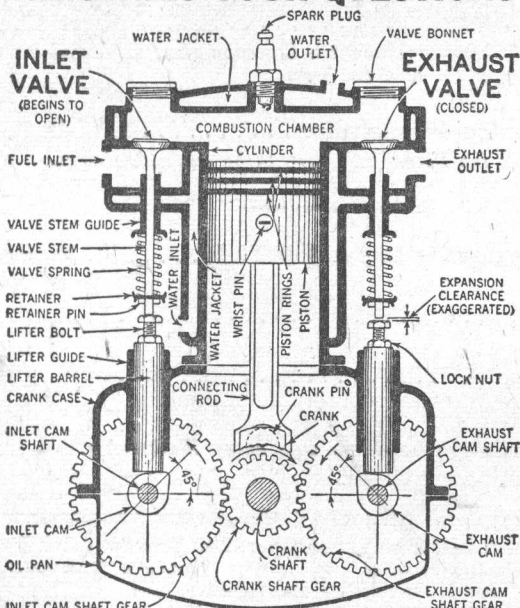
TO GET THIS ASSISTANCE
FOR YOURSELF
SIMPLY FILL IN AND
MAIL COUPON TODAY

\$4 COMPLETE
PAY \$1 A
ONLY 1 MO.

DIESEL ENGINES Fully Treated

If you are interested in the Construction, Operation or Maintenance of Modern Diesel Engines including the New 2 cycle Diesel this new book gives Practical, Useful Information. Contains over 100 pages on Diesel with many illustrations. All details thoroughly and clearly explained. These interesting pages will answer your Diesel questions—save fuel and operating trouble. Complete with all answers.

ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS



SPECIMEN ILLUSTRATION—INSIDE VIEW OF MOTOR

ASK TO SEE IT!

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 West 23rd St., New York
Please send me postpaid AUDELS NEW AUTOMOBILE GUIDE (\$4) for free examination. If I decide to keep it, I will send you \$1 within 7 days; then remit \$1 monthly until purchase price of \$4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it to you promptly.

Name _____
Address _____
Occupation _____
Reference _____ Buck

ARGOSY

America's Oldest and Best All-Fiction Magazine

Coming

Soon

Egypt in the '80's, a land ridden with the spies of other nations—and burning dangerously with the fire of her own religious zealots.

All the drama and color of that fascinating country in that turbulent time live in

DRUMS OF KHARTOUM

A novel of Chinese Gordon's war with an inspired madman

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Beginning in the
April 26th Argosy

Volume 307

CONTENTS FOR APRIL 12, 1941

Number 1

Destroyer!—First of six parts Steve Fisher 6

Now that the wolf-pack gathers from every quarter against democracy, what of our nation's life-line—that slender thread through the Panama Canal? A thrilling new novel of Americans who are not afraid to live dangerously

A Fighter Has to Figure—Short Story Eustace Cockrell 16

Learn from a studious pug how to win fights and alienate fans and make money doing same

Men of Daring—True Story in Pictures Stookie Allen 20

Charles F. Kane—Elegant Cop

Blow Cold, Blow Hot—Novelet Frederick C. Davis 21

Ladies, here is your plantation—comfortably equipped with a murderer, a load of dynamite, and a Caribbean hurricane

Davy Jones' Brother—Short Story Charles Tenney Jackson 33

Presenting Mase McKay, the Cracker who doesn't mind sharks, in an underwater ballet with a corpse

Murder Goes to Sea—Fifth of six parts Allan R. Bosworth 39

The captain's a jailer; the doctor's a detective; and the admiral's either a magician or a fool

News Item—Short Story Robert Cochran 50

He was a twentieth-century Robinson Crusoe, a giant who straddled two wars

Wet Beef from Mexico—Conclusion Walt Coburn 56

The fence across the Border will have to be cut with six-guns

Complaint of an Indignant Rat to His Lady J. D. Perkins 15

Argonotes 65

Looking Ahead! 55

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

A RED STAR Magazine

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President & Treasurer

WILLIAM T. DEWART, JR., Secretary

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE, 111 Rue Réaumur

LONDON: THE CONTINENTAL PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS, LTD., 3 La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4 Copyright, 1941, by Frank A. Munsey Company. Published weekly. Single copies 10c; Canada 12c. By the year \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; Canada, \$6.00. Other countries, \$7.00. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright and must not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyright in Great Britain. Printed in U. S. A. Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

Other RED STAR Magazines

FANTASTIC NOVELS . RED STAR MYSTERY . FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES . RED STAR ADVENTURES . CRACK-SHOT WESTERN . DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY . CONFESSION NOVEL OF THE MONTH . SILVER BUCK WESTERN . RED STAR LOVE REVELATIONS . RED STAR SECRET CONFESSIONS . DOUBLE DETECTIVE . ALL-STORY LOVE MAGAZINE . BIG CHIEF WESTERN . LOVE NOVEL OF THE MONTH . RAILROAD MAGAZINE . FIFTH COLUMN STORIES . SEA NOVEL MAGAZINE

GET THIS BOOK FREE!



"HIGH LIGHTS OF FISHIN'"

● 60-page, pocket size book on fishing. Written by M. W. Burlingame, noted angling authority. Not theory, but tried, proven methods and means for day and night fishing, casting, trolling, still fishing. A guide book every beginner and old timer can use. Sent free! Write to DELTA ELECTRIC CO., 350 W. 33rd St., Marion, Ind.



HI-STANDARD AUTOMATIC
22 caliber Model "B" for long rifle cartridges. Model "C" for .22 short cartridges. 4 1/2" or 6 3/4" barrel.

Choice \$18.95
Winchester Model 94 Carbine 20" barrel 30/20 and 32 Special calibers \$33.95
WIN. Mod. 92 Carbine 44/40 cal. 20" bbl. \$29.95
U.S. Gov't. Live Leather Sling Straps. \$ 1.00
Send stamp for each list.—Ammunition surplus, etc.—Used Rifles—Used Shotguns.
(\$2 Deposit required on all C.O.D.'s)

HUDSON SPORTING GOODS CO.
W-52 WARREN ST. (FREE—New Catalog) NEW YORK



Establish SELF CONFIDENCE

KNOW WHAT TO DO AND WHEN TO DO IT!

IS your faith in yourself shaken? Can you adjust yourself to the changing times? Have you found your plans and enterprises suddenly thwarted by the unexpected—robbing you of confidence? You do not have to be a prophet to know what is coming—or a miracle worker to make the most of an opportunity. Just as straws in the wind show its direction, so you can learn from the things people do what their moods and fancies are—and use them to your good advantage. If you once know human nature—its traits and psychological tendencies—you will have a confidence, born of knowledge, and equal to every situation.

ACCEPT THIS Free BOOK

For several centuries the Rosicrucians—a world-wide Fraternity—have made a study of these functions of mind and their relationship to human conduct in the world in which we live. To thousands of men and women they have made life less mysterious—and success and happiness more assured. Write today for a free copy of the book, *The Secret Heritage*. It contains no strange formulas, but tells how you may have these beneficial teachings for study in the privacy of your home. Address Scribe O.A.F.



The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
ROSICRUCIAN PARK SAN JOSE, CALIF.
NOT A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

MUSIC LESSONS

for less than 7¢ a day!



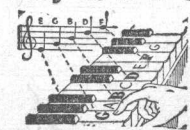
Learn your favorite instrument quickly, easily right at home

DID YOU think learning music was expensive? That you had to spend a lot for a private teacher, sheet music and other incidentals? Then here's grand news! You can now learn to play your favorite instrument for **LESS THAN SEVEN CENTS** a day! No extras of any kind. And it takes less time than you ever thought possible.

Play a Tune In One Lesson

You start playing a familiar melody in your very first lesson. You go on from one tune to another. Your rapid progress is amazing. You learn to play by playing—just as you learned English by speaking it. You learn by a remarkable short-cut method that skips all tedious drills and exercises. A method that has enrolled over 700,000 pupils from all over the world. It's actually fun learning this way. "One picture is worth a thousand words." That's the secret of this easy way to learn music. Your lessons are in print and picture form. They show you every position, every move—like a

Easy as A-B-C



The lines are always E-G-B-D-F. Memorize the sentence, "Every Good Boy Deserves Fun"—and there you are! And the spaces are always F-A-C-E. That spells "Face"—so simple enough to remember, isn't it?

teacher beside you, explaining, coaching you. See how easy it is to learn music this modern way. How inexpensive. Mail the coupon, checking your favorite instrument. Instruments supplied if needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 1034 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C. N. Y.

U. S. School of Music, 1034 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C.
Please send me Free Booklet and Print and Picture Sample. I would like to play instrument checked below. (Do you have instrument.....)

Piano	Accordion	Clarinet	Banjo
Violin	Saxophone	Trumpet	Ukulele
Guitar	Mandolin	Trombone	Other Instrument

Name.....
Street.....
City..... State.....

SUCCESS

Will You Pay the Price?

IF you are normal, you want the comforts and luxuries which are the by-products of success—a home of your own—a new car—the leisure to read—the means to travel.

You want these things very much.

But—you are keen enough to perceive that experience and facility in handling routine work will never get them for you.

What, then, are you doing to gain that specialized experience—that trained ability—for which business firms are willing to pay real money?

During the past thirty-three years over a million men have found the answer to that question in home-study training under the LaSalle Problem Method.

Evening after evening, they have seated themselves, to all intents and purposes, at the desks of men in high-salaried positions, and have squarely faced the problems of those positions.

Evening after evening, they have been shown the principles involved in the solution of such problems—and how those principles are applied by highly successful business houses.

Evening after evening, they have tackled concrete problems, lifted bodily from business life, and under the direction of some of the ablest men in their respective fields have worked those problems out for themselves.

That they have been well rewarded for their foresight and their earnestness is shown by the fact that during one period of only six months' time 1,248 LaSalle members reported salary increases totaling \$1,399,507—an average increase per man of 89%.

Send for Free Book

"Ten Years' Promotion in One"

If you—knowing these facts—are content to drift, you will not profit by reading further.

If on the other hand you have imagination enough to see yourself in a home of your own, enjoying the comforts and luxuries of life—the coupon below may shorten your journey to success by many years.

Note, please, that the coupon will bring you full particulars of the training which appeals to you, together with your copy of that most inspiring booklet, "Ten Years' Promotion in One"—all without obligation.

If you want success, and are willing to pay the price, ACT!

-----Find Yourself Through LaSalle!-----

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 458-R CHICAGO

I should be glad to learn about your salary-increasing plan as applied to my advancement in the business field checked below.

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Stenotypy
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Business English

- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence

Name..... Age.....

Present Position.....

Address.....

Destroyer!



By Steve Fisher

Author of "Goodbye, Hawaii", "Pigboat Guy", etc.

Does America face invasion? What would be the strategy of the invaders—and the strategy of our defense? These are huge questions in the minds of everyone; and here are their answers in a dramatic and deeply moving story of two brave men and a spirited girl who live in the tomorrow we pray will never come

CHAPTER I

WAR IN THE SPRING

IT SNOWED in New York that winter, and the snow flakes, fat and shapeless, fell in a white curtain against the lights of the city. There were dance bands, just as there always are, and new musical comedies, and fine plays. A Pulitzer Prize was awarded, and there was the Theatre Guild and William Saroyan and Walter Winchell.

There was a kidnaping on the West Coast, a cold wave in the North, and a flood in the South. There were new pictures from Hollywood; and news bulletins from abroad came every few hours. There was always news, one move or another. There were rumors and conferences, panic and famine. The commentators came on the radio and told you all about it. They were still going on after all these months; and, of course, there was much talk about Canada.

All over the United States young men from the cities, the towns, and the farms were being trained under arms.

The ship yards were busy. There was the clanking of steel, the hoarse thunder of a thousand buzzing rivet drills. Airplane factories were jammed with orders four years in advance, and one after another new army bombers came off the assembly line.

Japan was running the Orient. We recalled our citizens from the Far East. There was a statement issued by the United States Department of War that was the next thing to a direct ultimatum (the American fleet was in Singapore at the time), but Japan, protected by the Axis Powers, ignored it, and nothing was done; we did not declare war. People talked; there were peace moves. There were radio forums where you heard fine speeches and gaudy patriotism flaunted freely, but no guns went off.

A month later a South American republic declared itself in line with the Axis Powers, and Germany and Italy moved warships (and troop transports, it was rumored) to the coast of that country.

There were scathing editorials in all the newspapers, and the president spoke to the nation and used phrases like "perilous situation", and "we are prepared." There was a peace rally in Madison Square Garden, which ended in a riot and the deaths of two New York policemen who were trying to keep order. A congressional committee reported sabotage in seven different American gasoline refineries, and the price of first-grade gasoline went up to forty cents a gallon, and later to forty-three cents.

Then, simultaneously, Germany seized Dutch Guiana, and Japan made threatening overtures in the Philippines.

The United States immediately mobilized.

But only a small percentage of the new naval craft under construction had been completed. The air force of the combined enemy powers outnumbered American planes at a ratio of six to one. In total naval tonnage the ratio was slightly less.

They had fifteen large tanks to every one of ours. Four million Americans were in uniform, but still there was no war. There was appeasement talk, which was not popular. Spain wanted a portion of Louisiana. Mexico wanted a hundred square miles of Texas. Then, silent until now, Russia suddenly landed troops and planes in Alaska and ran up the Communist flag. The United States stood alone against the world.

Another three million Americans mobilized, bringing the total fighting forces to seven million.

People did not sleep well at night. Anti-aircraft guns were being constructed on tall buildings. There was a slump on Wall Street. The value of gold went down. Business firms failed. Banks stayed open only by government order. Ten thousand people who were loud-voiced patriots in peacetime fled for the Canadian border. But among the civilians who were left were new, alien faces which had appeared, mysteriously, from nowhere.

Wherever you looked there were soldiers, and parades with bands, and tanks, and artillery; and squadrons of new planes roared overhead day and night. Dance bands still played, young women wept, and now, in March, there was no more talk of peace.

IN EARLY March the Pacific was green, bright and hot with the sun, flecked white with froth. For two days there was a storm off the Gulf Stream, but after that it was calm again, and there were very many flying fish which made small flashes of silver lightning across the jade surface.

From the submarines you saw these fish all the time and quite often they flew right up on deck. Here they flopped grotesquely on the black lattice-work, growing gradually weaker until at last they were dead. The tropic sun rotted them very quickly and twice a day sailors had to climb down from the conning tower and gather the putrid winged-fish and throw them over the side.

The submarines were old and small and the trip was grueling for the men and hard on the engines, so that there were only four underwater dives during those entire twenty-two days. The remainder of the time they stayed on the surface following the *USS Holland*, a big auxiliary ship which was the tender.

There were fourteen of the submarines and they followed the tender like gray cigar-shaped suckling pigs. It would have been easy for a plane to spot them, but they kept a close watch and no planes were sighted.

The submarines were S-boats, not fleet craft at all (the new V-type moved with the fleet and were quite fast and very big). In the S-boats there were four torpedo tubes forward, and one aft. All of the torpedoes had been fitted with war-heads and were in readiness for any eventuality. The S-boats' top speed was twelve knots; only five, submerged. For a number of years they had been based at Pearl Harbor where they cruised around Maui, Molakai and Oahu in the patrol of the Hawaiian Islands.

Below-decks the ships were cramped and uncomfortable. They were outmoded pig-iron boats and they rattled and wheezed with the pounding of the big Diesel Engines. There were air condensers in the compartments, but nevertheless the air was foul and hot, and stank of an acid that ate your dungarees and made the skin on your arms and your face itch and burn.

One of these old submarines was the *S-4* which sank a number of years ago with its entire crew; and was later brought up and reconditioned.

The submarines had sailed under sealed orders, and a strict radio silence was maintained. In the Pacific they saw only two other ships—both of them freighters bound for South America. All fourteen of the submarines dove and the freighters passed the *USS Holland*, dipped their colors in salute to a man-o-war, and continued peacefully on their way, unaware that a fleet of small submarines lay beneath them.

The submarines had run short on all food and the men now ate non-perishable cereals, mixed with powdered milk, and hardtack and jam.

But when they reached Panama they tied up and took on fuel oil and fresh provisions. A few hours later they proceeded through the canal. On the *S-14* a man had died of acute appendicitis; and five others had been taken off the *USS Holland*, stricken with fever, and transferred to the naval hospital.

IN THE Caribbean it was cooler and there was rain and wind for three days. They saw an occasional island, leafy and green, and now and again an American cruiser crawled across the horizon.

On the fifth day the fourth despatch of sealed orders was opened. Six of the submarines immediately turned back to Colon for repairs and overhaul, and the other eight disunited and sailed singly to the longitudes assigned them. The *Holland* moored off a former British base.

The captain on the *S-60* said: "We're part of a blockade. The iron net."

"Have you heard anything yet, sir?"

"No. But you needn't worry. They'll inform us when hostilities commence."

"Do you imagine it'll be soon?"

"I imagine so, but there's no way of telling," Captain Knight said. "The entire fleet is engaged in war maneuvers: actually, or figuratively, we *are* at war! At least we're taking positions against what must inevitably be a naval attack."

"Then we're going to wait for them to strike?"

"I'm afraid it's necessary. We're outnumbered. If we sought them out it's possible that we might fall into a trap—leaving our coast vulnerable to attack. Half their forces might bottle us up somewhere. No, we're the defenders, with our backs to the wall; we can do nothing but stick at our posts and wait for them."

"And have we any chance for a quick victory?"

"I'm afraid not," Captain Knight said bluntly. "Our fleet is small, many of the ships are old. Moreover, half our main-line units are in Guam ready to strike at Japan. There'll be a major sea battle out there in the Pacific worse than anything that took place at Jutland. But the Japanese are notably rotten marksmen and it may be that our Pacific fleet will annihilate them."

"I hope so!"

"This I'll say—Tokyo'll be bombed before Los Angeles or San Francisco. But nothing that happens in the Pacific will affect us. It's like a separate war."

"We're here on the Atlantic and our reduced forces face the biggest enemy fleet in the history of the world. Not only the navies of Germany and Italy, but the best large ships of several other navies—captured ships now manned by German seamen."

"All heavy?"

"Yes, and God knows how many destroyers and submarines they have. Aircraft I won't even discuss. They have almost more planes than men; hundreds of munition factories are turning out bombs for them. There is nothing exaggerated about this. If anything, I underestimate."

"What is *our* job?"

"The iron net. The S-boats will do what they can. But it's like setting bear traps to catch a herd of elephants. We know that sooner or later the enemy will invade these waters. We will lie directly in the path between the enemy flotilla and our own main Atlantic fleet."

"We'll lie *between* them, sir?"

THE captain nodded. "It is perfectly simple. You understand war maneuvers. In operations on land there are various lines of defense—first, second and third."

"Last is the main line, which in this case is our Atlantic squadrons: battleships and heavy cruisers. On land the first line of defense is the weakest, usually consisting of machine-gun placements, French 75's, anti-aircraft, and anti-tank guns. The attacking force (as in the case of France) runs through this line—annihilates it. In such a defense there can be no opportunity for retreat."

"The attackers now meet the second line of defense. This is made up of heavier gun emplacements, tank traps, defense tanks, barbed wire, and all manner of equipment."

"The attacking spearhead penetrates this, although now (the opponent hopes) somewhat weakened—and finally hits the main line of defense. Here, ordinarily, a tremendous battle occurs. The main line of defense is heavy artillery and the full fighting forces of the opponents."

"The unscathed right and left flanks of the first and second defense lines are now supposed to close in on the rear of the enemy spearhead. The whole thing is beautiful! It's gorgeous—*on paper*. This was the celebrated Weygand defense."

"I lost a month's pay in wagers on the fall of Paris because I was sure that such a system (and basically, it is sound; with a few improvements we've borrowed it, in essence, for naval defense) couldn't be defeated. But they were defeated—miserably."

"To what do you attribute it, sir?"

"The enemy had superior, over-powering force. It is exactly the same thing we're up against!"

"I see!"

"Have you ever been in swimming and stung by nettles?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Well, we are the nettles. The enemy fleet will enter these waters ready to engage our own fleet in battle. But to reach them they must pass us. We fourteen S-boats will go into action. We'll torpedo as many of their capital ships as we possibly can."

"Hundreds of fighter planes and bombers will swarm out from nearby bases and give us a hand in the battle. They'll bomb and dive at the enemy, but of course they'll have to contend with enemy aircraft. We'll have only one element in our favor—a few seconds of surprise. Like nettles, the submarines will sting and harass the enemy ships. With luck we may sink a few of them."

"But to torpedo them we'll have to be at periscope depth. What about the anti-submarine fleet—the destroyers? Won't the enemy be protected by a convoy of them?"

"Yes, by hundreds of them!" The captain's voice was calm. "And because we have our own job to do we will not be permitted to submerge to a safe depth until we have fired all our 'fish' and the tubes are empty. We have orders to ignore the destroyers."

"But that'll be—*suicide*!"

The captain smiled wryly. "The first line of defense is always in that position. War is worked out on charts. It is a game played with units. Although I am more than certain that we shall not survive this action when it comes, I cannot but see and admire the strategy that placed us here."

"Suicide fleet—"

"Yes. There was a motion picture of that title once, rather mild, I think; and certainly it wasn't like this. This will be like nothing any of us have ever lived before. You see it had to be us, don't you?"

"It couldn't have been the fine big V-type subs. They're far too valuable to sacrifice in a preliminary show of this sort. I mean it, I make the statement with no bitterness in my heart. If I were in the admiralty I only hope that I should have had the acumen to arrange the same situation. We are fourteen creaky, over-age tubs; and this one action is the only decent excuse there is for the expense we've been to the government."

"Nobly expressed, sir."

"There's nothing noble about it. I don't think any man minds doing what he can for his country. It takes no heroism (I doubt such a thing exists) because war makes you fatalistic. You have your job to do and you can but execute it as well as you know how."

"Perhaps the attack won't come for weeks."

"It can be weeks, days or hours."

"And in the end, sir, we shall give an excellent accounting of ourselves."

"I am certain of it," the captain said.

CHAPTER II

SUICIDE FLEET

THAT night (after his conversation with the captain)

Jeff lay on his bunk in the darkness of the S-60's wardroom. He did not know if he had actually slept but now he opened his eyes and lay very still.

The hot, filthy air stuck in his throat. He was garbed only in shorts, but his body was sticky with sweat. He reflected on the captain's words; and yet, even now, the war seemed removed from him.

Reality is a hard thing to come by. He was here, on this ship, in the war zone; and yet to his incredulous mind it was more as if this were some grotesque play in which he was a participant. He was frightened that he knew no fear, and 'it occurred to him that this was because the thick air had rendered him physically listless. He performed his duties with a mechanical lassitude which really involved very little thought. The long grind at sea had worn him down.

Jeff's consciousness had long ago been numbed by the heavy, ceaseless throb of the Diesel Engines. *Pump . . . pump . . . pump*. Day and night, until at last (like a man who lives beside a waterfall) he no longer even heard it. Instead, at this moment, he quite clearly heard the sound of a violin. Jackie, a machinist mate, was in the torpedo room playing it. A violin on a submarine: the only music aboard! Jeff had still not lost his ironic taste for the contrast that this offered. The violin played *Poor Butterfly*.

"Propaganda," Jeff said.

He flung out a long arm and groped in his locker for a cigarette. The wardroom was dark and very small. Only strips of dirty canvas separated its bunks, table and locker space from the forward battery compartment where the men slept.

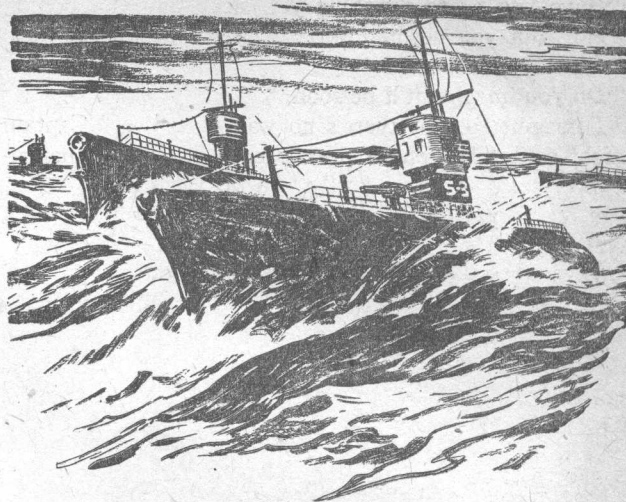
At sea you did little more than eat, sleep and stand watch. There was no shower on board so that you couldn't bathe; and if you shaved in cold water it was at your own risk. But the officers would shave. They had to set an example that only a few would follow. All of them were packed together below decks like sardines in a can.

Jeff was a junior-lieutenant, and there were three other officers: two junior-lieutenants and one senior. The senior was Lieutenant Knight and by virtue of being commanding officer he was called "captain." Jeff wiped the moisture from his lips and put a cigarette in his mouth. He lit up, puffed, and at the same time stretched the muscles in his legs.

"I'm decayed," he thought, "the damn acid is decaying me!"

THE S-60's blunt bow rose in a rocking motion, and fell; it climbed to the peak of every land swell, and descended into every watery canyon. Jeff snapped on the dim overhead light and rolled out of the upper bunk.

He hit the deck with a thud and stood there in his bare feet, his blond hair rumped, his sunburnt face mottled. The steel deck plates were hot and oily under his toes. He put on sandals and approached the tin wash basin.



There was half an inch of water in it, and it was muddy with twice-used soap; but he knew the condensers had been five times on the blink, and a good officer didn't waste fresh water. He slapped what there was there over his hot, sweaty face. It refreshed him a little. He glanced at the clock taped to a shelf. 11:20. He had forty minutes before he took the midnight watch. He decided to shave.

"I look like hell!"

The mirror was warped and steamy, and he rubbed his hand across it. He was tall, well-built, and he leaned forward peeling sunburnt flecks of skin from his nose.

When he'd finished the shave he put on dungaree trousers, a clean undershirt, and an old blue tunic which he left unbuttoned. He slapped a greasy officer's cap on his head and left the wardroom. He moved through the narrow companionway of the forward battery to the torpedo room.

The bow of the boat sloped downward toward the shiny discs of the torpedo tube doors, and the machinist with the violin stood crouched here playing. He wore dungaree trousers, a tattered skivie shirt, and straw goateads from Honolulu. He glanced up at Jeff, and kept playing.

Long torpedoes were strapped to the bulkheads where they lay in iron cradles; they were slick with grease and glistened dully. The sailors sat around on bunks, some crouched on deck playing Acey Ducey. They were all listening to the violin. Six of the crew were civilians caught in the draft, but the long trip had moulded them so that they were no longer green boots, but like everyone else. Jackie finished playing now.

"Anything special you'd like to hear, sir?"

"No," Jeff said. "Thanks. I've got the mid to four. I won't be able to stay."

As he left the torpedo room he heard the violin again, and it sounded strangely, he did not know why. He entered the cramped, squarish control room. The periscope was secured in a steel stump in the middle of the deck. An escape hatch (built in within the last few years) took up much of the precious room; and against either bulkhead the riveted overhead was so low that you had to duck. Jeff climbed the ladder, up through the air compression room, and into the conning tower.

CAPTAIN KNIGHT was here, and Lanny Morris, the executive officer. Morris had the watch. A coxswain operated the small iron steering lever, and a signalman,

binoculars in his hands, sat up on the oak rim of the cup-like tower. The night was hot, and the stars in the sky looked white and naked. The moonlit sea was a rippling purple.

"Good evening, sir."

"Hello, Jeff," the captain said. He was a good-natured, thickset man. He wore dungaree trousers, and a blue tunic. "We've just decoded a message from the division commander. It's good news, I believe." He turned. "What would you say, Mr. Morris? Wouldn't you say it was good news?"

"I would say it was damn good news," Mr. Morris said.

"We're going in," the captain announced. He didn't sound displeased. "Unless there's an emergency we'll be in for four or five days. You'll be able to go ashore. You've a friend in Cristobal, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. Nick Waters, the writer."

"Well, tomorrow morning (we'll be out of this zone by that time) you can radio him you'll be in. We're officially relieved from duty for a while and there's no necessity for keeping a radio silence."

"That'll be swell," Jeff said.

"I thought you'd like it. (I've read all of Nick Waters' books, you know; and I think he's very good.) I'm going to let you and Mr. Morris have leave—to freshen up. God knows we all need it; and it may very well be that this is the last shore leave any of us'll get."

"I hadn't thought of that," Mr. Morris said. "I daresay I will once I get in Cristobal."

The captain chuckled. "I imagine the two of you'll raise merry hell."

"Aren't you going ashore, sir?" Jeff asked.

"No. The engineer and myself will have to stay aboard and take care of the ship. They're going to give us an overhaul job, and it's up to us to supervise."

"But couldn't I take your place, skipper? I mean—"

"No—and don't worry. This S-60's Old Man'll get over for a glass of beer all right."

When Captain Knight and Mr. Morris had gone below Jeff stood in the bridge and watched the dirty gray bow of the submarine slowly rise and fall. The captain had written his instructions for the night, and laid out the course that would bring them in. They would arrive in Colon about six tomorrow evening. It was late now and the breeze dried the sweat in Jeff's dungarees.

Jeff was glad about leave in Colon; he had very special cause to be glad.

He began to think of Nick Waters. Nick wasn't in Panama without reason: he was up to something, and whatever it was, it would be dangerous. That was the way Nick lived. He had traveled abroad for years. He was an international figure. He'd been in Madrid during the Spanish war, and in Paris when it fell. He had been in the last war, also, but Jeff knew very little about that.

Jeff had met him at the races in Milan that summer the Middies were in Europe. There'd been a party, they'd gone drinking, and Nick had taken an immense liking to him.

Once in a while two men meet who are bound to become close friends. It was like that. Both Jeff and Nick were men of action. They shared similar tastes and opinions. Each could handle himself in a brawl. Among writers Nick was rated as one of the finest realists in literature and Jeff was flattered that Nick, a celebrity, should like him.

On the other hand the exploits of a submarine officer intrigued Nick and he never stopped asking questions about undersea navigation. The second time Jeff saw him was in Honolulu and he had shown Nick the town. Women went crazy over Nick, and they had very good times. But it had been a year now since he had seen him and Jeff was anxious to renew the friendship.

He leaned on the rail of the conning tower, and looked off across the purple of the desolate ocean. The Diesels were below-decks and up here he could scarcely hear them. The air was fresh, and sweet, and there was in the wind the taste of the tropics.

CHAPTER III

GIRL WITH THE GREEN EYES

CRISTOBAL was wet with rain, and smelled wet; the wet smell of wood in frame buildings, and the wet, sweet smell of grass in the parks and civic squares; and the whisper of tall, giddy coco palms, shaking themselves.

On the roof tops you could still hear them hammering anti-aircraft guns into place. In the streets there was the sound of rivet-drills and there were huge piles of bricks and dirt and mortar. Workmen were building air shelters. On the streets, too, there was the noise of bars, the marimba music, and there were soldiers and sailors, and cheap women; and white-clad tourists, and dark-coated alien refugees.

There were peddlers, with gaudy shawls, crying their wares; and busy, black-skinned Panamanians. In Cash Alley pale and sick young women chattered of invasion and bombs. They washed down peanuts with gin, and spoke of total destruction.

Nick Waters sat very still in his hotel room, the shades half drawn, the windows rain-wet. Softly there came to him the music of his radio; a cigarette burned in an ash tray. To Nick it seemed that the room was very quiet. It occurred to him that if he listened with all of his might it was possible he would hear the laughter of his comrades in Madrid; and if he concentrated properly he could sit again in the Pom-Pom, the one on the Champs Elysées, gay French girls around him, their yellow hair piled on their heads, kitten eyes bright, and their striped silk dresses tight on their bodies.

But then he'd remember that day in May. The goose-stepping troops that swung through the Place de Concorde, and finally around the Arc de Triumphe. The tired, worn-out victory army of Austrian and Bavarian farm boys. And then, when they had been sent to a new front, the steel, gray-faced Nazi army of occupation that moved in upon the city.

He stirred. None of these memories could matter now. In retrospect he could perceive that there was really very little in his life that mattered—except Kathie. It must have been that he'd loved her ever since Madrid. And she'd disappeared.

He caught up with her a week later in Barcelona, but she only laughed. And months afterward, in Paris, she had taken all the information he had to offer (for one of her news-magazine articles) and once the exclusive story was on the cables she left him again.

He remembered racing alone in a taxi to Gare St. Lazare, and then standing desolated on the platform because her train had already left. Always he pursued;

always she eluded him. She gained whatever material she wanted (he had ways of discovering important information now and then) and then she vanished.

HE HAD tried hating her. One night in a pub in London (he remembered it was a wet night, and afterward, because he was drunk, he got lost in the fog in Trafalgar Square; and he had stood clinging to a lamp post, listening to the scream of an air-raid warning) he had tried hating her. But it hadn't been any good. He always thought he'd find her some day again, and he always did. But that would only make it worse. It would turn from a pain of nostalgia into torture.

She meant no harm. It wasn't her fault she didn't love him. It was true she got her news stories in devious ways, but she was absolutely independent. He remembered reading an article she wrote from Finland. There was a picture of her in white ski togs, and he had thought, looking at the picture, that she was the prettiest girl alive!

Sometimes it seemed incredible to him (ego was his stock in trade) that he should be disappointed in love. Nick Waters! He must have known a hundred women, and he'd even loved some of them. There was that nurse in France—how many years ago had that been?—he'd met in a ruined *château* the time he lay wounded with shrapnel after the show in the Somme. But he realized that Katherine was unlike any of the others.

He glanced at his watch. She was due to arrive in Cristobal tonight. She had radioed him, and he had deliberately avoided meeting the boat. She had been aware, of course, of his feeling toward her, but there was no point in letting her know the condition was still acute.

At any rate he had an excuse to stay in his room, and here he had remained, so that when she arrived on the dock she would look around, and, not seeing him, be disappointed. Yet in his heart he realized she was too cosmopolitan to be upset by the smite of such a midget revenge. She had always been able to see through his subterfuge and now she would only laugh, and think him infantile for being so peevish.

No matter how complex a web of intrigue he wove to trap Kathie, it was always himself who, in the end, became helplessly entangled.

He glanced around the room. The wall paper was faded, and the ceiling was low. Tacked on one wall there was a huge map of Panama, showing both the Pacific and Atlantic sides, extending as far as Haiti. Martinique was outlined in red crayon as were several other islands in and through the West Indies.

All of the bases acquired from the British were circled with blue. There were special, penciled notations around St. Thomas, Guayama, Barahona and Port-au-Prince. On an opposite wall was a huge map of the Eastern sea coast of the United States, showing portions of Mexico.

There was a table near the front windows and on this was Nick's portable typewriter and several pads of paper. "I do everything in long hand and revise it on typewriter," he explained to people. There was a pile of old maps and several dusty tomes on the table.

Nick was a linguist. He played a dangerous and usually profitless game against the wars of the world. Profitless, because his only gain was an occasional short story of some experience or other. Novels were more difficult and he didn't often write them. It was a lonely life. He was so constituted that he could not live without excitement

and he went from war to war, like a weary soldier of fortune.

"It's funny I haven't been killed," he thought.

There was a knock on the door. He jumped. He was ashamed of the wild excitement that surged through him. Then he opened the door, and he was staring at Kathie. His tight, creased face broke into a grin.

"Hello, baby!"

SHE was refreshingly young, and beautifully radiant. Her reddish hair came to her shoulders, and her eyes were green, her lips dark crimson. She was only twenty-five, and looked like a smart young business girl of nineteen.

She wore a mustard-colored skirt that was tight on her hips; and a blouse that was open at the throat. Her skin was tan but the blouse revealed a tiny portion of white at the breast. She wore a green rain slicker thrown loosely over her shoulders; and her feet and shapely ankles were booted with galoshes.

"Hello, Nick, you old dog!" she said lovingly. She came into the room, shedding the slicker. Nick closed the door, and leaned back against it. He wore gray trousers over his long legs; they were held up by English-leather suspenders. Kathie was glancing around the room.

"It looks the same, darling. Do you always carry your hotel rooms with you? This looks exactly like the one you had in Shanghai!"

Nick was smiling. "The only thing I ever change is the maps." He nodded his head. "Over there is a map of the United States."

She sobered. "Oh, Nick—isn't it terrible?"

"A thing is always a thousand times worse when it comes home," he said.

She nodded. "How have you been, darling?"

"I wish you wouldn't call me that."

"But I call everybody that."

"I know."

"Nick—grumpy! Aren't you glad to see me?"

"No."

He kept watching her, sick and ashamed because seeing her made him want to cry; and yet his face was unchanged. "You're beautiful, Kathie," he said. "Do you know that? Each time a little more beautiful than the last." He paused, and went on quickly, as matter-of-fact as possible: "Where you going to live?"

"Next door to you."

"What?" He thought that he had heard wrong.

"Yes, next door to you. They're putting my luggage in there now. You know, Nick—the way it was in Warsaw when we were in that siege together!" She laughed, "And I'm going to have secret dictaphones installed all over your room and write my articles about everything you find out!"

"Sure," he said, "the way it always is."

"Yes, that's it! Good old Nick. I don't know what I'd do without you, darling!"

"I'm glad I have my uses," he said. "Anyway, you'll have someone's shoulder to cry on when the bombing starts."

"Did I ever cry during a bombing?"

"No." He thought it over. "I don't think you ever cry, Kathie. Over anything." He paused. "Sit down and I'll make you a drink."

She sat down, tapping a cigarette on her polished red

thumbnail. Nick crossed the room and moved into the dinky pantry. He tapped ice cubes out of a tray, and poured rum into tall glasses.

He noticed that his hand shook, and it occurred to him that he was not quite well. He didn't know why he always went to pieces when he was near her. It was plain that she liked him only because he could give her information for an article. She spoke now.

"I missed you at the boat."

He didn't turn. "I wasn't there."

"That was the conclusion I came to. I waited an hour. There was no telephone on the dock or I should have called you to come and get me."

He squirmed miserably. "I have an important appointment here at the room. I had to stay in in the event my party called." He entered with the drinks. He was awkward and spilled rum on the mustard skirt. Her eyes came up and met his. He pretended he hadn't noticed.

He went to a chair, and sat down. He wound one long leg over another, coddled his drink, and stared at the windows. There was a wind blowing and a few drops of rain splashed across the dark panes.

CHAPTER IV

TRAITORS' TOWN

LATER, when he and Kathie had talked for an hour and re-acquainted themselves, he said: "About Panama. I'm wherever war is, you know that, Kathie. Panama City and Cristobal will get the hell bombed out of them."

"The first strike will be here, and I have information that it'll come within forty-eight hours. Possibly it's cock-eyed information, since the source isn't very good. But at any rate it won't be long."

"If the enemy wins the battle of Panama—then what?" Kathie asked. She was very clever on the typewriter. Nick knew that she was memorizing every word he said. He shifted uncomfortably.

"After Panama I believe they'll make a stab at the East Coast cities—Philly, New York, Boston and Newark. The first three have Navy yards, the fourth munitions factories. They'll mix military objectives up with a little terrorist bombing. The United States has only half a navy in the Atlantic and if the Axis Powers can bottle it up, sink or cripple it—they'll land a million men and the big war will be on."

"So their first objective will be the United States Atlantic Squadron. Until they've wiped that out they can't make any moves without being so harrassed as to stand a chance of a military set-back."

"What about Mexico?"

"It's too big, messy and decayed for them to run troops across. They may try to make use of native Mexican troops—attacking Texas; but that is largely a matter of diplomacy. The Mexicans will hold off until they see which way the war is going. They'll talk a lot, but they'll hold off."

"And Russia?"

"Unless she is appeased in Alaska there's a chance that Seattle may become another Helsinki. That will be a land-and-air operation—but we have strong troop enforcements in the Northwest and the Russian Bear may come in for a trouncing, even though their soldiers will outnumber the Americans three or four to one."

"Remember Russia is working independently of German-Italian-Japanese Powers. She is simply taking advantage of a situation too good to miss. If she is given parts of Alaska she may hold off entirely to watch which way the war goes."

"And you think Japan will attack on the West Coast?"

"I'm certain of it!"

"Then the United States is circled!"

"That's the way they fight nowadays," Nick said. "When you're down they all pile on. They think as long as they've got the Nazis to lead them they can't lose."

"Nick, who are you working for?"

"Nobody," Nick said. "Did you want me to say I was working for the government—I'm not." His glass (the third one) was empty, and he put it down. The wind had blown the window open and he got up and closed it. Outside there was the pattering of rain. "But I'm finding out things the government'll be glad to know," he went on. He returned to his chair.

"What angles do you work?"

"I play along with all the German importers and their clerks. With the alien refugees, and that lot. In every ten I get to know there's one that's a spy and maybe three in the Fifth Column—paid to commit sabotage and create panic once the war starts. I play along with all of them."

"What do they think you can do for them?"

"I GIVE them maps," Nick said, grinning. "Old maps that are no damn good. But they send them to Europe and don't know that until months later. I have other angles along the same lines. They're underpaid wretches and it's easy to fool them. Of course they're suspicious, but they can't be sure just where I stand."

"I tell them I worked for Franco in Spain and they believe it. Franco is a good Nazi. I tell the Ogpu agents that I was with the Loyalists and they gush. They make fine, stirring—and empty—speeches. All of them—except the real Nazi agents—can be bought. For two hundred dollars they'd turn traitor to their country—so long as they felt they wouldn't be caught."

"I tell you, Kathie, they're a wretched, scheming lot! They're the army that enters and decays a country—rots it from inside, so that it's ripe for invasion!"

"But if they ever find out—"

He nodded. "If they ever discover my only purpose in mixing with them is so I can inform the United States government—I'll get a bullet in the back. And they're bound to find out once the war is declared!"

He paused. "It just happened that I was in a good position to get to know these agents—being a linguist, and known as a writer—and my contributions to the cause, whatever their worth, will be to help bring about their arrests."

"But Nick—what about you?"

"I can take care of myself," he said. "There's only one man—a Mark Stohl—who's any good. I think he's the Nazi Intelligence chief here. I know him only by hearsay. He'd have seen through my simple strategy, so I didn't go near him. Stohl may be dangerous." He smiled. "But if you put any of this on the wires before I'm ready to break it, Kathie, I'll be a dead man tomorrow."

It had been agreed long ago that she'd cable whatever news he could give her only when he was ready to release it.

"And you can't use my name," he said. "I'm known as a writer (I hope!) and I'll be damned if I want any By

Kathrine Winters publicity as a G-man. You see why."

She was looking across the room at him. "Why do you do all this, Nick? Risk your life and—"

"Because I hate them," he said. "I've got a burning hatred; and I fight them every way I know how!"

"Why don't you have these men arrested now?"

"Because some of them have minor diplomatic connections. Proof would be hard to get. There'd be trials and red tape. And until war does start there's little damage they can actually do. But once hostilities begin it's a different matter. We grab them—give them a military trial—and take them out and shoot them!"

Nick was silent now and he and Kathie sat and looked at one another. It was like old times. The room was full of stale cigarette smoke. Her second drink was scarcely touched and the ice had melted in it. There was a tray full of red-smeared cigarettes in front of her. Rain beat against the windows, and the radio played low. Now, carefully analyzing all he had told her, she asked a question.

"You said you had a party coming here to see you tonight?"

"Yes, a government man. He's late."

"You must be going to give him some information."

Nick grinned. "You don't miss a trick, do you?" All the same he felt a little cold about it. He supposed it was futile to wish that she would like him more for himself and less for his intrinsic value.

"Is it something you haven't told me?"

He nodded.

"What?"

"I can't reveal it, Kathie. I trust you, but I can't. This is quite big. It was information I just stumbled on, and—"

"It must be *very* important!"

"It is," he said. "If it's true, it is."

"Nick, you actually sound frightened!"

"I am frightened," he said. "It's a thing which may cost thousands of American lives."

CHAPTER V

YES, YOU'LL DIE

SHE had gone to her room to unpack. Nick stood alone at the wet, dark windows, his hands in his pockets. The world was different with Kathie here, and it occurred to him that even his thoughts were different. He wiped his hand down over his face, and now he turned.

Remembering the time, he was alarmed. Of a sudden he was furious with the government. What he had to say seemed important. It at least behooved them to hear him out. He picked up the telephone and called a number he knew to be Intelligence Headquarters.

"This is Nick Waters," he said. "I was told one of your men would be here to see me."

"There was an emergency, Mr. Waters. At the last minute he was called elsewhere."

"You might have phoned."

"We intended to," the voice said, "but we've been busy. Suppose you come down here?"

It was clear that they were not much impressed with him and if the news had not been so important Nick would have told them to forget it and banged up the receiver. Instead, he said: "All right. I'll be there."

He put on his short pea-coat, and went into the hall. He never wore a hat.

Outside, the air was crisp and wet and the palm trees that lined the street were sinister and blowsy, like tall women who have neglected to comb their hair. The shuttered frame buildings which squatted opposite one another across the cobblestone canyons were (from the smell, at least) ancient with decay.

It irritated Nick that on the outskirts of Cristobal there flickered from the street corners no more than gas-light. He drove his car swiftly over the bumpy streets. The rain had turned to a thin drizzle and his windshield wiper squeaked as it moved back and forth over the pane of dripping glass.

Intelligence Headquarters were in a shabby building on the other end of town. Electric lights shone down over the dirty red-brown entrance, and there were several cars parked in the street.

Inside, it was somewhat like a police precinct with carpetless, unpainted wooden floors. A Navy yeoman sat at a desk, and when Nick had given his name he was directed to an office down the hall. He entered without knocking.

A GRIZZLY bulldog of a man looked up from his desk. His eyes were small and black. They seemed to look through you. His hair was tousled, a mixture of jet black and salt-gray the contrast of which gave an odd effect.

He had John L. Lewis eyebrows; and the things you noticed about his white face were the thick lips, and that jowls seemed to protrude from either side of his jaw. His expression was unpleasant and at once suspicious. But at the same time he seemed busy and harried, his desk littered with papers.

"You're Waters, I suppose?" He nodded to a straight chair. "Please sit down." Nick was about to speak, but the other went on: "It occurred to me while you were on your way over that there is a writer named Nick Waters. Do you know him?"

"Yes, very well," Nick said. "I wrote many of his books."

"Then you *are* he?" He indicated neither surprise nor pleasure, in fact the scowl on his face had deepened; but it seemed to Nick that he was at least a trifle mollified.

"My name is Barton Craig," he went on. "I am in charge of a certain branch of undercover operations in the Panama Canal Zone." Nick could not help but admire the fact that the Intelligence chief wasted no words on cordiality. "If you have any information we should be pleased to use it. In fact we are enlisting new agents wherever we can find them."

"When we've finished the business at hand perhaps we could discuss an arrangement by which you can be of service. I think a man in your position—your reputation as a writer is a perfect cover-up—could find a way of being a good deal of help."

"I hope so," Nick said.

"Then you're interested?"

"Yes."

"All right," Barton Craig said. "Now what is it you've come to report?"

But Nick wasn't going to be rushed into anything. He carefully explained what he had been doing. "I've worked only for myself. It's because I wanted to. This is the first war in which I've ever had an ax to grind. The experiences I had in all the others was only grist for the mill."

Here in Panama I've rubbed elbows with some of the worst men alive. In one way and another I've gained information—names and addresses—and once war starts I think I can help round up the most dangerous of them."

Craig nodded.

"From two of these underpaid foreign agents I think I've learned something of vital importance. Neither man knows the other, and neither is aware that he revealed anything meant to be secret. One story I heard was rumor, the other fact. It was only by coupling them that the thing took on significance."

Craig seemed more interested now, and he adjusted his chair and prepared to listen.

"**I**T CONCERNS an enemy base," Nick said. "I don't pretend to know military business, but from what I have been able to find out, all of the enemy bases are quite a distance flying time even from Panama."

"That's true."

"If they could operate from a small temporary base closer to the canal the attack would be much easier."

"Do you *know* of such a base?" Craig asked. He had plucked a hair from his shaggy eyebrows, and was looking at it. But now he glanced up.

"I think that I do," Nick said.

Craig looked skeptical.

"If it does exist," Nick went on, "it is an island, barren and rocky. Because it is in an out-of-the-way place—in an archipelago along the coast of Colombia—it probably hasn't been carefully patrolled."

"However, the enemy has discovered that this one island has miles of hard, flat beach suitable for aircraft take-offs. And the information I have is that for the past two days they have been assembling hundreds of airships here for a tentative raid on the Canal Zone."

"Incredible!"

"I don't think so," said Nick. "They could operate from such a base until we discovered it. Small tankers could bring fuel oil. Portable tents could be set up inland for a pilots' barracks. It'd be an ace in the hole that—in the opening phase of the war—might cost our forces a hell of a lot."

The Intelligence chief stared at Nick for a moment, studying his face. He spoke sharply.

"By your own confession," he said, "this is simply rumor. Panama's full of that. If what you say is true it's damned well important. But I hope you'll give me something more definite to go on. Do you have any notion of the longitudes of your hypothetical island?"

"Just a general idea," Nick said. "But I think I could locate it by air. I'd like to try anyway."

"First tell me how you came across the information," Craig said.

Nick explained, "The man I learned about it from is named Weil. He says he discovered it one day by accident when a boat he was in blew miles off its course. He noticed the island's geographical possibilities, and though he was not very excited about it, thought it worthwhile to mention it in a report to the Axis Powers. After that it slipped his mind."

"The fool had literally struck gold and didn't realize it! Even when he received a cable in code instructing him to give further details he discounted it as routine, and without even visiting the island again, wrote a report of as much as he could remember. He imagined if his chiefs

saw any possibilities in this new report they would order him back to the island for a survey."

"But instead, he heard absolutely no more. When he spoke to his boss here in Cristobal, he was told the whole thing was absurd. Instead of being commended, he was severely criticized for taking up the valuable time of his chiefs with such nonsensical drivel."

"The reason is clear. They trust none of their men too much, and since he is a minor agent it seems obvious that this thing was so important they were anxious that he should learn no more about it."

"On his part, Weil was hurt that his bosses considered him blundering. He regarded as gross mistreatment his being raked over the coals simply for reporting a thing which at least might have had significance."

"One night in a bar, after he'd had several drinks he told me about it. He said it was a hard life. He was obliged to file a daily report, and yet only one in fifty actually contained information of tangible worth. He cited the business about the island as an instance where he had put in a great deal of labor only to be told rather harshly that he had wasted his time."

"But about the enemy moving planes?"

"This I picked up from a Russian who badly needed a haircut. He was boasting of the strength assembled against us, and he mentioned a number of blood-thirsty rumors. Among them was one of a nearby secret base. He had no facts, and probably ninety percent of everything he said was untrue. But this one statement stuck in my mind. I pumped him about it. He'd heard it somewhere; he forgot the source. By putting it together with Weil's story—"

CRAIG had reached for a telephone, and broke in on Nick. "I should like Lieutenant Williams sent for." There was a pause. "I don't care if he is on leave—recall him and have him report to this office at once!" He banged up the receiver. "I don't believe your tale at all, Waters," he said.

"What?"

"No, I don't believe you. It's fantastic. We get rumors like that all day long. But the fact is, I can't take the chance that you might be right. It's a thousand to one, but this government can't afford to gamble. I'm putting at your disposal a navy seaplane and a pilot."

"Well, I—"

Craig raised his hand. "I told you earlier tonight that the appointment in your room wasn't kept because we were busy. That wasn't exactly true. We try to keep all appointments. The truth is, I cabled Washington for a dossier on you—if any existed."

"You see I *was* pretty sure that you were Waters, the writer. Just before you phoned I had my reply. Your record seems to be clean. This is a time when we need agents very badly and a man of your caliber can be a good deal of help." He paused. "You're working for your government, Waters. A yeoman is already making up a service record for you, and preparing papers."

"But I—"

"Tomorrow you can go through the routine of being fingerprinted and sworn in. I hope you'll volunteer for this service, because otherwise I'll have to draft you."

Nick grinned. Craig had been a dozen jumps ahead of him all the time and he couldn't help but admire him for it.

"I'll be glad to do what I can," Nick said.

He wasn't quite prepared for what came next.

Craig leaned back and folded his hands. "The island secret base is your first assignment." He considered. "It may be your last."

"What do you mean?" Nick asked.

"Isn't it obvious? If the enemy is fortifying such a base—mind you, I don't believe it—they wouldn't be fools enough to leave it unguarded. Once you come down to observe them you'll be spotted. And I don't think they'd let you get away alive."

"I guess you're right."

"So if you find the island," Craig said, "you have one job and I depend on you to do it: radio us the longitude and latitude. If you can escape after that, fine."

Nick saw that Craig considered him no more than a unit in the prosecution of war. If he were fortunate to

locate the island his only possible reward could be certain death. The cold-blooded aspect of the thing amused him.

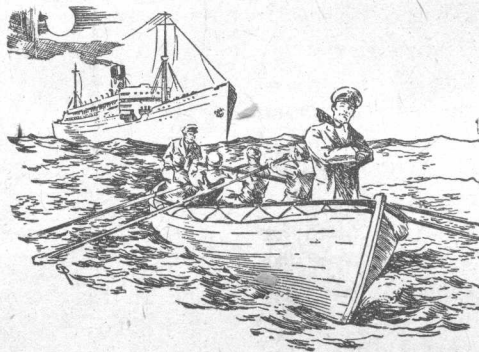
"At least if I do find it, they could say I was the first man to die in action in the new war."

"Yes," Craig replied. "They could say that of you and Williams. It'd make a good military obituary. But personally I don't believe in tributes. In time of war everybody risks death—even the civilians these days. I should think it much harder to die of poison gas in a street two blocks from home than in the execution of a maneuver you know to be of value."

Nick had thought of death very often without qualm; and now Craig's logic made him ashamed for having been so squeamish.

"I'm beginning to like the old goat," he thought.

(To Be Continued Next Week)



Complaint of an Indignant Rat to His Lady

(Research chemists have found that black and piebald rats, if fed on a diet deficient in some ingredients of water-soluble vitamins of the B family (Vitamin B complex), developed prematurely gray fur on their backs.—*News item.*)

Darling, I am growing nuts
From wearing plain and fancy ruts
Through mazes where, when doctors please
I run around in search of cheese.
I've stood for scientific breeding,
Vivisection, hormone feeding;
And students after their diplomas
Experiment me into comas.

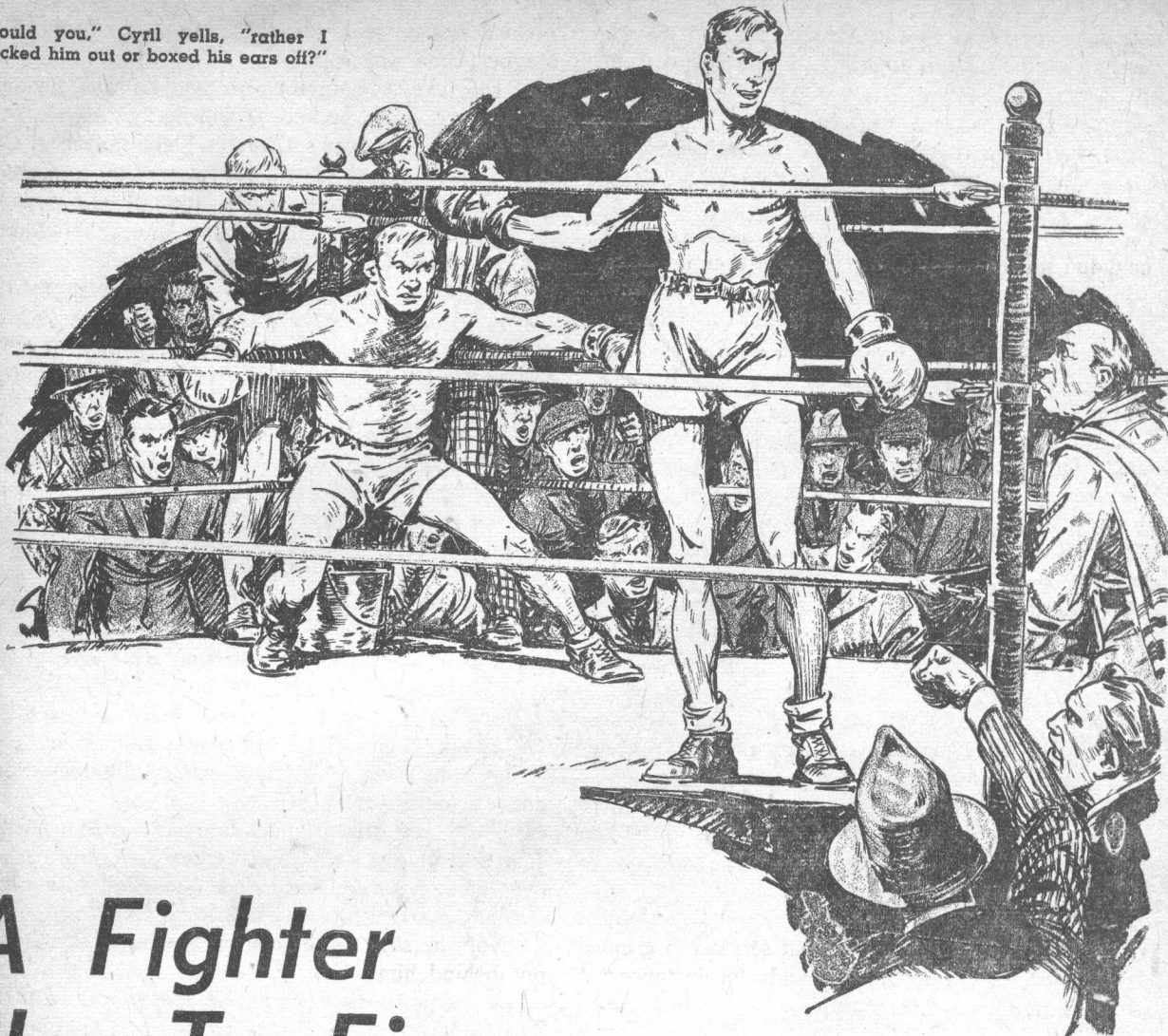
*So much I've stood; but scientists betray
A rat, who'd prematurely turn him gray.*

The research boys have found with glee
That vitamins (especially B)
Contribute pigmentation—black
Or piebald—to a rodent's back.
And thus (they've got their story cold)
The way to make a rat look old,
Debase him, cause his head to bow,
Is this: de-vitamin his chow.

*I've got my strength, my dear; I still can slay
The doc who tries to turn my fur to gray!*

—J. D. Perkins.

"Would you," Cyril yells, "rather I knocked him out or boxed his ears off?"



A Fighter Has To Figure

Saga of a very scientific pugilist who could analyze every angle of his profession—except a cheering house

By Eustace Cockrell

Author of "The Divine Right", "No Minutes To Go", etc.

I'M AN old guy, see? I been around a long time. A long, long time. It said in the papers I was his manager, but I wasn't. He paid me a salary. So much a week, rain or shine; fight or not. He did all the managing that was done. He made his own fights, picked his own spots.

I was his second. He hired me because I am one of the best seconds in the world. I can do a lot for a guy in that time you get to work between rounds. That's why he hired me. He always hired the best he could. Why, two or three times he had sparrin' partners could beat the guy he was training for.

He hired me because I was one of the best seconds in the country, but that didn't matter. I never told him anything between rounds and he never come back to his corner in trouble, but once. He reminded me of some

of them in the old days. Because he was no stumblebum.

You say they all got to get hit a lot and hurt a lot? Not all of them. Did you ever hear of Young Griffo? He couldn't punch his way out of a paper sack with his hands on fire, but they never hit him solid when he was right. Packy McFarland fought ten, eleven times once in a month and was sore because he wound up with a black eye. And if Jim Corbett had a mark on him from fighting, I never saw it.

His name was Cyril Brady. He was a natural middleweight. Weighed a hundred fifty-eight and never varied more than a pound or two in or out of training.

He won thirty-two straights in the amateurs out on the Coast and there was a lot of guys trying to sign him up but he never listened to them. First time I ever talked to him was one morning the phone woke me up at my hotel and

he asks if he can come up and see me. He told me who he was but it didn't mean anything. I told him to come on up.

He came in the room; I was still in bed. He walked over and sat down in the chair and I tried to place him. He was a sallow-faced fellow and he looked like any clerk though he was kind of tall.

"You're Mr. Danny Fayden, aren't you?" he asked, and he didn't sound any more like a fighter than he looked.

I admitted I was.

"Well," he said, "from what I am able to read and observe you are probably the best man in the world for a boxer to have in his corner during a contest."

"Maybe I am," I said, grinning.

"I am anxious to make some arrangement with you," he said, "Theoretically," he went on, "a situation could arise where the competence of your second could be the deciding factor in a fight."

"Leaving the theory aside," I told him, "there are Joes will tell you that me and Whitey Bimstein and Ray Arcel have won more fights than any three guys in the world."

"I came to you because you are older than those you mention—"

"Came to me for what?" I interrupted.

"To be my second," Cyril said. "I can beat any man in the world under a hundred and sixty pounds."

"Oh, I said. "Who have you beat so far?"

"Nobody but a few amateurs," he said. "I came here to New York to get some professional fights. I think I can get along here faster. There is more money and more talent."

HOW could you take a guy like that serious? I grinned a little wider. "How many rounds for instance," I asked, "would it take you to stow away Mr. Eddie Kincaid?" Mr. Eddie Kincaid being the champion.

"I could beat him in fifteen rounds," Cyril said, "but I'm not ready for him." He paused. "But that hasn't anything to do with it. How much would you take to be my nominal manager for the next five years and always be in my corner when I fight and work with me in training and so forth?"

Now things have not been so good. I am not a manager and I am an old duck and have been around a long time. There are Joes will tell you that I am not as fast as I used to be and that I am strictly a windbag that talks about the old days.

"Oh," I said aloud, "a hunnert and expenses—that's a week—and I guess we could deal." This I say very offhand and sarcastic, see?

This Cyril takes out a sheaf of papers from his pocket. They are typewritten papers and he takes a pen off the desk and makes a few fill-ins. "I am taking Law," he says, "by correspondence, and I have drawn up this contract myself, leaving the spaces blank for salary and so forth. I have filled in one hundred and expenses. Will you sign here?" He points to the line.

Now I take a little pause, as they say. I look over the papers. They read all right to me and I am not so sleepy. "This is all right," I tells him, "but what about binding the bargain?" And I am not grinning so wide.

He fumbles around in his pocket for a few seconds and brings out a billfold. He peels off ten twenties and hands them to me. "Here are two weeks in advance," he says, "Will you sign?"

Good money, see? Strictly Uncle Sam's finest. I sign. Maybe I ain't woke up.

"I will take the contract with me," he says, tucking the papers back in his pocket. "I will be fighting a six-round semi-windup at Eagan's Upstairs Fight Palace in Queens next Tuesday night. I will expect you to be there." He starts to go, then stops at the door. "Here is your expenses," he says, "get off at Hunters Point." He hands me a nickel for the subway.

I am out there all right. I am out there with my kit and a new sponge and my lucky bucket. I am there right on the dot. Cyril is sitting down in the booth they call a dressing room with two, three other bums. They give me plenty looks—I am famous, see, and I don't work nothing but the Garden and such spots as a rule.

Marcus Books is there. I figure he owns most all the fighters on the card. "Hello, Danny," he says, "I see you got the reincorporation of Stanley Ketchel settin' over there. How does it feel to be back in a champion's corner?"

I got to dummy up, see? I don't know nothing about my boy. The two C's got me out here. I look around.

Cyril is sitting in a corner reading a thick book. He has a new towel robe around him and he is sitting on a little stool. I ease over. "Who're we fightin'?" I ask.

He looks up from the book. "Hello," he says.

"Who we fightin'?" I ask again, feeling silly.

"Oh," he says. "A fellow named Blunder Roos. It doesn't matter."

"No?" Now this Blunder is a very good trial horse a couple years ago and while he has gone way back to be over here, I remember him as a monkey with plenty of moxie and strong in close.

"No," he says. And then we get our call and I go on out behind him.

We get up in the ring and the referee looks a little bug-eyed when he sees me in Cyril's corner, but he don't do more than grin.

"Blunder Roos," he says pointing like Joe Humphreys used to, but still not no more like Joe than nothing. "Hunnert fifty-nine and tree quarters."

Which is a damn lie. Blunder has got a life-saver around his belly and he had trouble making sixty two years ago. "An, Cyril Brady, one fifty seven and tree quarters." And he cuts his hand like Joe used to do, pointing and marking the weight, though the worst seats in the house was closer than you could get in the Stadium for eleven-fifty and they could have heard him if he was talking natural.

CYRIL goes out and I go with him. Billy Moore is third in the ring and he tells the boys the same thing he has told the boys always: "Break clean and come out fightin'," Billy finishes.

We go back to the corner. "This Blunder is a hooker," I says from habit, trying to tell my guy right. "Give him a long left hand and wait a round or two."

Cyril don't even look like he heard me. He stands up and looks out at the crowd from his corner. "Would you," he yells, "rather I knocked him out or boxed his ears off?"

It was wonderful. Really wonderful. They hate over in Queens like they hate the Giants in Brooklyn. Boy, they started hating that Cyril right then.

This Brady, he is a long drink of water without no muscle showing on him and he is sallow as a cheap candle. When he hollers that, they really start hating him.

"Kill 'im, Blunder!"

"Gut him!"

"Murder him!"

It never got to Blunder. They ain't anything got to Blunder for a long time. But he grinned when they yelled at him and came out bounding. I was out of the ring like twenty years ago, fast.

Cyril comes out and he is all oil, he's got a left hand that is long as a clothes line and thin so you can't hardly see it. He stabbed this Blunder forty-two times more or less right on the nose and he never got cooled off from Blunder fannin' him. He went away like Tooney in the seventh at Chi that time, but prettier, and you couldn't have bought a tomato for a quarter at Washington Market as big and red as Blunder's nose, come the bell.

Cyril sits down in the corner and I give him a little conversation and a little ice on the back of his neck. He shoves me away. "I'll tell you what I want you to do," he says. "Just leave me alone until I need you and when I need you I'll tell you."

I'd like to tell him, the stupid, that when he wants me and needs me he won't be able to tell me. But not tonight. I get down slow, halfway out of the ring with the ten-second buzzer and there is C. Brady standing up talking to the crowd. "I don't want to hurt him," he yells, "so I'll knock him out this round."

And he did. He stiffened Blunder with a right cross about halfway through the round and poor old Blunder was groping for the rope trying to pull himself up at *ten*. They tried to spit on Cyril going down the aisle to the dressing room.

"What," I asks him as he is putting on his clothes, "was the idea of the speeches?"

He looked at me. "People will come to see you hoping you'll win or hoping you'll lose. I want to get everybody hating me so they'll come to see me lose, then when I win they'll hate me worse and come again when I fight."

"You don't expect ever to lose, I suppose?" I says.

"Oh, no," he says.

The promoter bustles in the door then. He pays Cyril off. It is thirty-five bucks. "I'll see you next Tuesday," the promoter says.

"Yes," Cyril says. "How long would you like the fight to last?"

Jimmy Eagan is the promoter and he looks at Cyril. "You're fightin' Billy Haynes," he says, "and I hope Billy kills you."

"You're paying me seventy-five dollars," Cyril says, "according to our agreement, as if I beat Blunder. Well, Mr. Eagan, you hope Billy Haynes beats me so bad, how about paying me a hundred and fifty if I win and nothing if I lose?"

"You damned well right," Jimmy says.

EAGAN scaled his prices up forty percent and the joint was packed. They started booing Cyril when we started down the aisle. But he didn't pay any more attention to them going up the aisle this time than if the place was empty. Tonight he is playing cold silent contempt.

Now Billy Haynes is a pretty good fighter and was on his way up. He is young and tough and very enthusiastic. That is, he is very enthusiastic for two rounds. By that time he is cut up so bad that the referee stops it.

Cyril looks out at the crowd and shrugs his shoulders like "Well, it's not my fault he was so over-matched."

The next day there is a little in some of the papers

about the fight and one writer comments on Brady's lack of sportsmanship.

Brady is up in my room talking to me when I show him this. He looks at it and smiles. "I wonder why they think it is a sport," he says.

"There are some guys," I say, "that treat it like a sport. That—"

"Yes," he says, "the Blunder Roos's." He goes on then: "I have a chance to fight a windup in Jersey for two fifty. It is a week from Friday. I don't believe I'll take it."

"No?" I says.

"No," he says, "I made some mistakes against Haynes. I don't think I want another fight for a month."

"Some mistakes? I didn't see any mistakes. It looked to me like you done about perfect."

"No," he says. "He hit me twice in the first round."

"Oh," I said. "You think this is a mistake?"

"Yes," he said. "While it didn't hurt me, if Eddie Kincaid had had those shots it might have been serious."

I just grunt.

"I am in this business to make money," he says, "not to get hit."

"That is an angle," I says.

"Listen," he said, "I worked two years, three hours a day hitting a bag on a long rope with my left. I didn't just happen to be able to stab a guy when I wanted to. I worked with the best boys that were in the gym and would work with me for two years."

"I saw every picture that Eddie Kincaid and all the other topnotchers ever had taken of their fights twenty, thirty times. I know every move they make by heart. I carried paper wads in my hands squeezing them all the time for months to strengthen my hands."

"I worked with the heavy bag four rounds a day. I sleep every night, I eat very carefully. I'm not a natural. I prepare for a fight the way a good lawyer prepares for a case. This stuff of acting mean, that's just to make people hate me so I'll be worth more at the gate."

Now this is something; a little all right. A guy that wants to be a fighter and learns to fight. That is certainly a little different.

AND like he says he gets into the money. In the ring he taunts his opponents and out of the ring he taunts his opponents. He offers to fight them winner-take-all. He treats the crowds like morons to come to a fight so uneven as him fighting somebody.

And the time comes, finally, when he gets Kincaid.

It is like this. He makes a match for himself with one-round Finnegan, who is supposed to be the contender and he agrees to fight Finnegan for nothing if he gets Kincaid as and if he beats Finnegan.

This gets into the papers and it packs the joint. They really hate this Cyril by now. He murders Finnegan and they have to stop it in the seventh.

And so he gets Kincaid. He gets Kincaid in an outdoor shot for June. You think he don't know what he's doing? Let me tell you how he trains for this one.

In the first place he does all his boxing at night under the lights. "I fight under the lights," he says, "why not train under them? Your body is a thing of habit. If you get used to working your best at two o'clock in the afternoon that's when you are going to feel the best. These guys that train, going to bed at nine for a fight that's gonna be held at ten at night, they get into the ring half sleepy."

So he gets up at noon, does his road work, eats breakfast at two-thirty, lunch at six-thirty, does his boxing at night and eats dinner at eleven, goes to bed at one-thirty. Everybody thinks he's crazy, but he's not crazy. If you think about it a little you'll see he is right.

Anyway, he gets Kincaid. And he comes up for Kincaid very sharp. But he does not seem to be thinking about the fight and this worries me. Kincaid is a fighter. He is a real, sure-enough champion. He is a short, wide guy very tough, a hitter.

The fight draws very well and the boos we get coming up the aisle make Cyril smile. But still it is a funny smile like he only hears them with one ear and he is thinking about something else.

He goes out with the bell and starts stabbing Kincaid, softening him up, working on his eyes. Eddie Kincaid has a lot of scar tissue on his face and he cuts easy. Cyril knows this very well.

Eddie Kincaid just grins and bulls in. He likes to get his shoulder under a guy's chin and fire at his belly with both hands. But he has never dealt with a man that can go away like Cyril and still punish you going away. The first round is Cyril's by a mile.

But I am uneasy. Brady acts like he is worrying about something. Like he is not thinking about the fight. He proves it in the second round.

Eddie rushes him into a corner and Brady ducks, sits down on the second rope and instinctively throws his hands out. Before he knows what is going on Kincaid has smashed his nose over to one side of his face, and dropped him with a left hook to the chin and Cyril is getting up, not taking a count, and Kincaid is rushing in, slugging his best and scoring plenty.

Brady goes down again. This time he doesn't get up right away because he can't. He's got a mouse over one eye as big as a egg it looks like. He makes it up at five and gets into a clinch some way and weathers out the round.

I go to work. He has to be led to his corner, and it takes me a second or two to get him there. I cut the mouse with a razor blade, suck out the blood, get some collodion over it, get his mouth piece out and rinsed, throw an ounce of brandy down him, clean up his nose and in the five seconds before the buzzer pour some ice water down his spine. He sits there all the time like he is still out. Then he gets up off his stool with the bell and with a mean look on his face and both hands down, cocked, he marches out.

BOY, what a brawl. He gets slugged a couple of times, but he has got Eddie backing up, bleeding and halfway through the round he drops Eddie, but he forgets to go to a neutral corner right away and Eddie gets about fifteen seconds rest.

He comes back with the bell and sits down. "That guy hurt me," he said, kind of resentful, "while I was thinking about my bar examination."

"Bar examination," I holler. "My God!"

"It's tomorrow," he says. "And I am not quite sound on torts."

"Box this guy—" I begin.

The buzzer sounds. "Box him," he says. "I am going to knock him kicking so I can get some more studying in tonight."

He goes out. He is a pretty sorry-looking sight in spite of the work I have done on him and he gets sorrier by the

minute. But he is giving as good as he gets and the crowd is standing up and Eddie Kincaid is backing up.

Cyril catches him with a right cross and drops him. But Eddie, he scrambles right up and comes bulling in. He gets his shoulder under Cyril's chin and belts him twice in the belly and Cyril goes pale and grunts. The bell rings.

Cyril comes back very shaky. "That man," he says, "he can be sued for defamation of character for what he called me in a clinch. I never hit a man like that and had him get right up," he added.

"He is a very tough tomato," I tell him, working like crazy. "Box him—" The buzzer sounds and I climb down.

"I'm about halfway mad at that fellow," Cyril says and he marches out.

He acts like it. He starts boxing, and when he's boxing he's pretty. But he steps into one and it drops him again.

"Take nine!" I scream.

He looks over at me, climbing up on one knee and nods. But when he gets up he walks in and starts slugging.

They stand out there and slug and the crowd is crazy. They both got blood all over them by now, but they ain't backing up. Finally Eddie is the one to give ground and Cyril is after him, hooking for his head, getting him measured. Finally he cuts loose with a right and Eddie goes down.

The bell rings.

"You got all night," I say. "Take your time and keep away from him."

"I am going to beat his head off," Cyril says a little thickly.

All the preparation and all the study and all the training is what saves Cyril. He is in a little better shape than Eddie and Eddie starts slowing down and Cyril piles on a little pace and pretty soon he gets Eddie set up and he lets him have a one-two and the right drops him. The referee could have counted a hundred.

You should hear them howl. They are standing up and really yelling. The ring is full of cops and they are trying to get Cyril to say something over the radio and he is sitting there in his corner with a dumb look on his face.

"Are they cheering me?" he says finally, in a low sort of voice.

"I say they are," I said. "You are a dead game boy and they always cheer them."

He feels his face with one hand as they cut off the glove. "You fixed me up, didn't you, Danny?" he said. "You saved me."

"That's what you pay me for," I said.

"I'm going to cut you thirty-three and a third out of this gate," he says, "and I am not going to take that examination tomorrow."

"Oh," I says.

"I'll take the examination sometime. Sometime when I am getting along and can't fight. But to tell you the truth, Danny, to hear 'em yell like that, that is pretty nice. And," he goes on, "and I need a manager, I need a manager awful bad."

"I'll get you another match with Eddie," I said, grinning. "We'll cut the champion's end."

"Do that," he says, "I won't get battered up like this the next time. And," he adds, "I'll murder the bum."

"Sure you will," I tell him, "And anyway," I add, "there's a jillion lawyers but there's only one of you. Champion of the world."

MEN of DARING

by STOOKIE ALLEN



DETECTIVE KANE

DURING 27 YEARS ON THE NEW YORK POLICE FORCE, CHARLES F. KANE MADE HIS MARK BOTH FOR COURAGE AND SARTORIAL ELEGANCE. HIS WARDROBE WAS THE BEST IN THE DEPARTMENT, COMPARING FAVORABLY WITH THAT OF MAYOR JIMMY WALKER FOR WHOM HE WAS BODYGUARD.

APPOINTED PATROLMAN IN 1912, KANE BECAME A DETECTIVE THE NEXT YEAR AND SOON RECEIVED HIS FIRST CITATION — FOR WORMING HIS WAY ALONG A LEDGE TO RESCUE A LADY TRAPPED BY FIRE IN A THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM.



OFFICER KANE

ALWAYS IN THE THICK OF THINGS, HE WAS COMMENDED FOR HELPING TO QUELL THE FAMOUS TOMBS PRISON BREAK, AND FOR VALOR DISPLAYED WHILE SHOOTING IT OUT WITH GUNMEN AT RISK OF HIS LIFE.



IN PARIS TO AID IN IDENTIFYING AN EX-DEVIL'S ISLAND CONVICT WANTED FOR THE SHATTUCK JEWEL ROBBERY, KANE SPOTTED "DAPPER DON" COLLINS AND ADDED THE CON-MAN TO HIS "BAG" AFTER A CHASE.

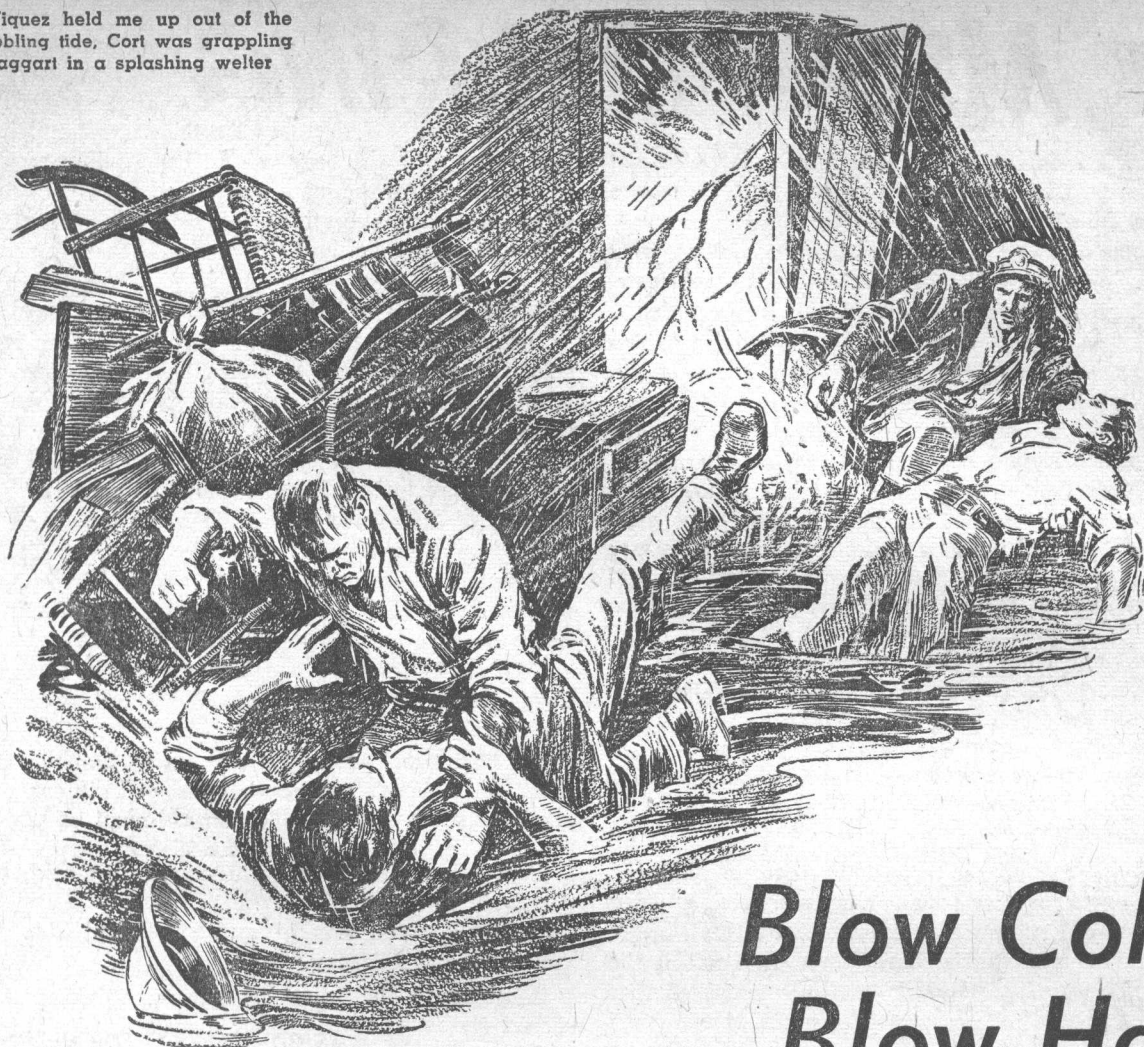


HE WON THE POLICE COMBAT CROSS IN 1934 FOR WADING INTO 3 HOLDUP MEN AND CAPTURING THEM IN A WHIRLWIND GUN-FIGHT. KANE WAS CITED 7 TIMES FOR GALLANTRY, HEROISM AND HUMANE AS WELL AS CLEVER POLICE WORK. HE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK WHILE PREPARING FOR A TOUR OF DUTY.



A True Story in Pictures

While Viquez held me up out of the dirty bubbling tide, Cort was grappling with Taggart in a splashing welter



Blow Cold, Blow Hot

Ever see a Caribbean storm, when the water is an avalanche and a man can drown on earth? Picture yourself in a torrent-battered house with two lovely girls—one of them dead—and a renegade playing hide-and-seek around the place with a load of dynamite. Then get a load of this

By Frederick C. Davis

Author of "Pennies From Chaos", "Option on Eldorado", etc.

I

TWISTING the truck off the wheelroad and into the clearing where the plantation huts clustered, I prepared myself to meet a bombardment of questions from Cort Cormick. While returning along the hedged fringe of our cacao groves I'd been rehearsing the answers as best I could, knowing in advance that Cort wouldn't like any part of them.

He'd be particularly concerned under these special circumstances, of course, because a hurricane was due at any minute to come spinning across southern Costa Rica from its breeding grounds in the Panama Gulf.

A tropical disturbance of small area but considerable intensity south of the Azuero Peninsula is reported advancing northwestward at a rate of fifteen knots.

During the past day and night our battery radio had repeatedly warned us in flawless Castilian and with increas-

ing urgency that the wind was veering our way. The latest announcement, even more pointedly, had promised: *The velocity at the storm center is more than one hundred miles per hour, and though some of its force may be expended while moving across the isthmus, the direct center will pass over Punta Blanca—which, within a few negligible miles, specifically meant us.*

The big breeze, however, like the Misses Sarilla and Sabina Stebbins, whose arrival Cort was momentarily expecting, was slightly delayed.

Cort appeared on the porch in clean whites as I jammed the truck to a stop, and a strained smile faded off his face. He'd been practicing smiling, I suspected. His blue eyes darkened when he saw that I'd brought the Stebbins luggage, but not the sisters themselves.

"Where are they, Mac?" he asked, his voice as ominously calm as the breathless air.

"You'll have to hold yourself in for another hour," I said. "That's when I'm instructed to call for their bookish highnesses."

I was just back from Port Limon, where Cort had sent me to pick the two Misses Stebbins off the *Minoneta*, a northbound freighter. He'd never seen them and had refused to come along on the grounds that he couldn't trust himself within speaking distance of them except in private. For several months he'd been nursing his ire in anticipation of this day when he could confront Sarilla and Sabina Stebbins personally, instead of their long, exasperating, jointly written letters.

Waiting here, he had meant to welcome them with the politeness which should be accorded two elderly maiden librarians, even though they had driven him almost crazy with their tart fault-finding. His determination to be courteous at all costs had put him under a strain, for his way was to talk with hard-hitting, man-to-man candor and once he cut loose at them it would be something to hear.

NOW the ruddy lines of Cort's mouth were deeper, showing that the delay was undermining his gallant intentions. "Where'd you leave them, Mac," he asked, "and why?"

"Punta Blanca, but they didn't deign to enlighten me as to their reasons for taking that particular detour."

He stared as if I'd lost my mind. "The point, of all places! Couldn't you make them understand the danger?"

"I was as persuasive as I know how to be, *amigo*. They gave me two cold stares and a scornful lift of their noses, in unison. Of course, they've hardly ever been outside the city limits of Sedalia, Missouri, but they remarked that they're well able to take care of themselves, thank you."

"They know even less about Central American weather than they know about tropical agriculture," Cort snapped. "You should have brought them, forcibly if necessary."

"You know, Cort, they automatically veto anything you or I may suggest. As for Punta Blanca, they told me that anyone with a grain of sense in his head can see it's a perfectly safe and lovely spot."

The Misses Stebbins had remained haughtily unimpressed when I'd explained that so far as current atmospheric conditions were concerned appearances were treacherous.

The sun was liquid light and the zenzontles in the coconut fronds were gayly mocking the cries of the cormorants. Gnats swarmed undisturbed in humid air that stirred not at all. The vermilion blossoms of the erythrinæ, which shaded our precious criollo trees, hung as still as oil paintings.

And all this beautiful peacefulness was false. Though there was nothing to indicate whether the wind would strike in fifty minutes or five, the true omen was in the unnatural color overhead—a peculiar, portentous purple.

"I called their attention to the sky, Cort, and told them what it means," I added, "and they said they think it's quite pretty."

"In less than an hour the storm will certainly hit the point. If they're caught in it they'll never be seen again. They simply don't realize what they're in for, and we can't leave them there no matter why they went."

"If they get blown ninety miles out into the Mosquito Gulf," I said, "it will simply be rank impertinence on the part of the hurricane which doesn't know who's boss around here."

Cort went into the house, where the porch furniture was

piled. All around us were signs of expected trouble, eloquent enough to anyone who has ever experienced the meteorological hell that brews in the doldrums. The awnings were reefed with heavy ropes. The windows were stoutly shuttered. All the mats were rolled up, our books were piled on chairs, everything movable was massed in the center of each room and tied under tarpaulins.

OUTSIDE, the weaker branches had been hacked off the mangroves and the coconuts had been shaken from the nearby palms so they wouldn't be hurled through our fermenting and drying sheds—or, perhaps, through the blacks or us—with cannonball force.

Our superstitious blacks had fled from their pod-gathering and were huddling under their thatched roofs far at the rear of the hilly clearing. Their low but fearful chant reached us as we took a look at the barometer. Throughout the day the mercury column had steadily dropped. It was at 28.32 now and still shrinking, like a thin silver snake crawling into the shelter of its hole.

"We ought to stake and lash the truck," I reminded Cort. "No telling when the wind'll hit, and we don't want our chariot to go whooshing clear across the Caribbean to Santo Domingo. Trouble is, the sisters Stebbins decreed precisely an hour's wait, and if we get back early they'll give us a piece of their minds, which might be worse than the blow."

"I'm going after them right now," Cort said, turning decisively to the door.

"I thought you would," and I followed him. "Well, you drive and I'll pray."

Climbing to the wheel he paused, thinking that we should first store the Stebbins luggage in the house, but seeing at once that it would take too long. Each Miss Stebbins had a trunk, several bags, an assortment of hat-boxes and a tangle of brightly decorated gourds strung on colored strings.

When stopping off at several way ports, they'd taken a fancy to the decorative *calabazas* which the Indians sell to tourists at ridiculous prices. Evidently the Misses Stebbins felt their collection would add a feminine touch to their new home.

They weren't here, you see, for just a brief visit. They planned to stay permanently, to take charge.

Letting the stuff lie untouched, we started off to rescue the willful ladies without whom our lives would be far happier.

II

THE wind held off, though I thought I heard the first faint whine of it in the distance. The continued delay was small satisfaction, for when it came it would play havoc with our trees. We weren't cultivating the hardy forastero variety of cacao, but the more delicate criollo. The best grown anywhere, our beans brought the highest prices and went into the making of the choicest confections and the finest liqueur—when we produced any beans.

The chiollos were as fussy as chronic invalids, and for six years Bart Stebbins and Cort Cormick and I had babied them. If they didn't get their hundred to hundred and fifty inches of rain they wilted. Without their eighty-degree Fahrenheit shade they curled up and died.

This year, fortunately, they'd had both just right. We'd managed to stave off a disastrous blight called witch broom,

and the spreading erythrinæ had saved them from a withering sun.

Perhaps it was just as well that Bart Stebbins hadn't lived long enough to see these fruits of our labors for, now that the hedges had at last grown high and thick enough to protect the tender criollos from any normal wind, they were about to feel a full-grown hurricane.

Not caring to think that it might destroy our groves, we thought instead of what it might do to Bart Stebbins' two sisters, who had inherited his two-thirds interest and whose durability was equally questionable.

There was a growl in Cort's throat as we jounced urgently along the pitted road, and I knew he was thinking that Bart's sisters should have learned a lesson from the end he'd met. Our senior partner had been caught in a small hurricane last year. Struggling to brace the sagging walls of the nursery during the height of it, he'd drowned on land, indoors.

"Why the hell, Mac," Cort asked suddenly, "did those women insist on being taken to Punta Blanca?"

"That's one I can't answer," I admitted. "But going back to the beginning, Miss Sarilla and Miss Sabina clippered down to Port of Spain, where they transferred to the *Minoneta*. They landed at Limon ahead of schedule—yesterday afternoon instead of this morning, as we'd expected—so they spent the night at La Posada Del Norte."

"Why didn't they let us know? They should have at least phoned, even if you and I are to be treated like a couple of dim-witted house boys."

"Maybe they used their extra time to ask questions about us. If so, they certainly must've found out something that makes them suspect us of villainous deeds."

"Suspect us?" Wrenching the truck around a rough bend, Cort frowned. "They're overlooking the fact, aren't they, that we've labored like maniacs for years to get the plantation into the best possible shape? After all, our share of it is everything we possess in this world."

"I thought they'd be cool, naturally, but I warn you, Cort, this is going to be even tougher than you've expected."

The relations between the Misses Stebbins and us had grown steadily worse, letter by letter, ever since they had chosen to assert themselves. Their two-thirds interest outvoting our joint one-third, they had insisted on supervising the plantation by remote control. We would fume over another of their lengthy, acrid letters and picture them with their prim heads together over their books in their musty little library in Missouri, agreeing that Cort and I were a pair of shiftless good-for-nothings.

A born planter, now backed by twelve years of raising copra in Papua, sisal in Yucatan and coffee in Tijuca, Cort Cormick had never in all his experience encountered anything like the Stebbins sisters' misguided, long-distance tyranny.

Small wonder we'd shuddered at the sight of every mail boat, for when Cort had heatedly protested that we were damned near killing ourselves in our efforts to make the plantation pay, and that the toil of it left us neither the time nor the energy to write the detailed day-by-day reports which they demanded, they had answered:

Either you are woefully incapable of meeting your responsibilities, or else you are disgracefully idlent. You will continue to submit precisely such information as we have requested. Signed, Sabina Stebbins (Miss), Sarilla Stebbins (Miss).

Now completely displeased with us, they had descended upon us with the purpose of taking the management of the plantation firmly into their own totally inexperienced hands.

"THEIR school-teacher attitude, the way they treat us like a couple of backward pupils—that's the least of it," Cort said abruptly. "Sooner or later the realities of the job would knock some practical sense into their heads."

Still flinging the truck toward Punta Blanca in an effort to outdistance the wind, his thoughts had taken the same course as mine.

"The real trouble is that the job will kill them first. They haven't got what it takes—neither the physical stamina nor what's more important, the moral courage. If they could be reasonable about it, they'd leave the real command to a man, but they won't admit the necessity of that and won't do it. They'll go blithering mad, meanwhile blaming us for it."

Grimly I agreed with him. We were smack on the thermal equator. The heat sapped our vitality, cooked our brains and at times was downright murderous. The humidity was often so thick as to clog our lungs to the point of suffocation. The incessant downpours during the wet season could dissolve the morale right out of a strong man's heart.

There were swarms of fleas, gnats and bloodthirsty ticks. There were terrifying winds such as the blow heading our way right now. It was a rare white woman whose spirit could survive in this tropical purgatory.

"Lord knows what we'll have left of the plantation after the hurricane's passed," Cort added. "We may have to start all over again from scratch. It wouldn't be so bad if the sisters had the guts to see it through. In fact, I'd like to meet a white woman who's fit—" He skipped the rest of that thought. "But two frail village-bred spinsters, constantly complaining, frightened out of their wits! My Lord, Mac, that's too much!"

Frail spinsters! For a second I considered telling Cort about the shock first sight of them had given me; but I decided against it. He'd find out soon enough for himself; and I rather looked forward to watching his reaction.

"You haven't said what you're going to do about 'em," I reminded him, hanging onto the seat as he swerved around another bend that would presently chute us down to the point. "Sell out?"

Cort's jaw set. In disgust he had suggested a fair figure to the Stebbins sisters. They had countered with an offer so niggardly that to accept it would mean not only years of labor gone for nothing, but the almost total loss of our original investment. We'd be left one step removed from the financial condition of a pair of cocovarian beachcombers.

"Damned if I will!" Cort said.

"Chuck the whole thing? Make them a present of it?"

"I'll not!" he roared.

"Then how does all this work out?"

"Somebody breaks," Cort promised doggedly. "Somebody cracks up."

Fumes of lube trailing behind us, we were coming down now to Punta Blanca, a white promontory overlooking white sand and a wide blue stretch of the gulf. A lonely arm of rock, ideal for a weather station but lacking one, it was sparsely treed. Almost directly below, still a mile away, a solitary figure was moving. That would be one of the Stebbins sisters. Unaware of our approach, she seemed

to be looking for something, by the way she moved.

"You haven't told me yet, Mac, why they came here."

The lone figure was momentarily cut from view as I answered, "They simply insisted on being taken. They must've had a reason, but they weren't saying what it was. They didn't trust me. They were so suspicious they made sure I wouldn't stick around to spy on them—watched until I drove out of sight. But as for why—"

THE shot was a completely unexpected, resonant boom in the still air. It thumped in our eardrums as we skirted behind a thicket. At almost the same time we again glimpsed the same Miss Stebbins. She had halted and seemed to be losing her balance, trying vainly to steady herself. The truck crashed ahead more rapidly and we saw her fall. She simply dropped flat, with a certain limp finality.

The next instant a man's head and shoulders popped vaguely into view nearby and as swiftly vanished.

"Good Lord, somebody shot her!" I blurted, too stunned to know I was speaking aloud. "He's running away!"

My glimpse of him had been so brief that I had no idea who he was.

The report was bringing the second Miss Stebbins into sight. Evidently she had wandered off from her sister, and now she reappeared from behind a weathered pile of stone. She didn't realize what had happened or was too bewildered to move quickly.

Something distracted her attention from the spot where her sister lay still. Suddenly, from a position that was hidden from us, the gun struck again. And exactly like her sister, the second Miss Stebbins wavered, dropped and sprawled motionless.

We saw this as we sped on to the point, but of the man who had fired the gun we saw nothing more.

Cort jumped from the truck the moment he'd taken it as far as it could roll, and I scrambled after him. The second sister was not visible now, having tumbled into a shallow crevice, but the first was directly ahead. Bending over her, Cort was frozen for a moment. And I got that reaction I'd been waiting for—though certainly under different circumstances from those I'd expected.

This Miss Stebbins was nothing like the woman he had expected to see. She was young, not more than twenty-five, with hair the color of pale sherry, a pretty face that was almost sweet. She was wearing a pinafore sports outfit and there was a red blotch on her blouse directly between her breasts.

Startled and wordless, Cort turned from her and sought the second Miss Stebbins. The second sister's wound was near her temple—an ugly gash—but I judged from my quick examination that the bone was scarcely scratched. Unlike the other girl, this one was alive. Once he was sure of this, Cort saw that her appearance was the same as the other's, in every stitch of her dress and every line of her face. The two of them were as alike as two beans from the same criollo pod.

Cort said, "My gosh, Mac. Why didn't you tell me?"

A soft, gentle rain had begun to fall as we bent over the sister who hadn't been killed. The sun had faded into a purple twilight, and the tops of the trees were shaking. The ground wind was still a whisper with only a hint of a whistle in it, but there was a vibrating hum somewhere in the sky, a deep drumlike roll in the distance, and at last the start of the hurricane was here.

III

CORT was inside the truck, with both the dead Miss Stebbins and the one who still lived, and I was fighting the wheel. The rain, no longer a soothing patter, was striking down at an angle.

Though the road was already streaming, we were going to get the western half of the hurricane which precipitates the most water, and so far we'd seen very little of it.

The truck rocked and skidded but kept its wheels underneath. Ground swells were rolling along the coast, still comparatively sluggish—twenty or thirty knots, I guessed, soon to increase to express-train speed. The gusts were taking a few vicious preliminary slaps at the trees when I swung into the clearing. The blacks' huts were dim behind the slanting downpour, but we were lucky to reach the house while the fun was still getting under way.

We carried the dead girl into my bedroom and put her under a tight tarpaulin. The other, still unconscious, we tucked into Cort's bed. We were too stunned by the unaccountable brutality of what had happened to think of bringing in the luggage or staking down the truck. While I broke out the first-aid kit and worked over the wounded girl Cort ground the crank of the telephone.

"Who was the man with the gun, Mac?" he asked. "Did you get a better look at him than I did?"

Applying iodine to the girl's injury, I shook my head.

We had a line connecting with the United Fruit wire between Limon and San Jose. Cort intended that the port police should learn of the attack as soon as possible. After twisting the handle for a full minute he slammed the receiver on the hook.

"Can't get through."

The instant he opened the door a gust shook the room. He leaned against the wind and with his shielded eyes traced the phone wire. The angle of the rain was sharper now. It sheeted past the door like high waves seen through a porthole, and a swirling eddy flooded across the floor. Cort pulled himself back inside and braced against the door to force it shut. He had stayed under the porch but the whole length of him was drenched.

"The wire's still up as far as I could see. I don't believe it's blown down anywhere so soon as all this. There's not enough of a breeze yet."

We looked at each other with the same thought in our eyes. The man who had shot the Stebbins sisters had watched us while slipping away from Punta Blanca. He had foreseen that there would be a call to Limon and at some point along the road he had cut the wire.

Somehow we felt sure, without knowing why, that he'd intended to murder both Misses Stebbins, and we wondered whether he knew his bullet had all but missed the mark the second time. If he did know, what would he do about it—find an escape under cover of the hurricane's aftermath, or first try to finish the job? Since we'd be isolated from Limon for hours, or very possibly for days, it was rather an important subject for speculation. In search of an answer, Cort probed into the wounded girl's pockets.

"Twins," he said. "You didn't tell me that either, Mac." I shrugged.

"Wasn't too surprised to learn it." I rolled a bandage over the girl's forehead. "Other thing about them, all unpleasant, impressed me more, so I forgot."

"She's much younger than I thought, almost good-looking. Not at all like the sort of person she seemed in their

letters. You didn't mention that either." He glared at me. "No," I said, "I wanted to save that."

UNTIL we'd found Bart Stebbins' will we hadn't even known about his sisters. Being by nature unusually taciturn, he'd never mentioned having any relatives in the States. For their part, probably assuming that their brother had told us all the personal details necessary, they had confined their correspondence to business matters.

From their letters we'd formed the impression that they were bespectacled, top-knotted, sharp-nosed and snuffy; and I still felt that the surviving sister must be just like that inside, despite her unexpectedly pleasing exterior.

"Do her looks make any difference? It's still a fact that she's here to rule the roost and demote us to the position of ignorant servants. She still has a rare talent for nagging hell out of us for no justifiable reason. She's not feeling superior and scornful and suspicious at the moment, so her face is relaxed, quite changed. Maybe she's capable of being a very nice girl and we brought out the worst in her, but when she comes to you'll see the difference."

Cort straightened with a bit of closely folded paper he'd found. "Hurt badly?"

"Just concussion and shock, I think, but she's staying out longer than she should. Her inborn perverseness accounts for it, no doubt. Don't quite understand it, but it's best to let her rest."

"Which sister is this one? Sarilla or Sabina?"

"I don't know. To me it doesn't matter. By any name at all she'd be just as objectionable."

"You didn't tell me they were twins," Cort murmured. "I'd no idea they'd be so young, and almost pretty."

Big winds do strange things to a person's emotions. Already Cort seemed to be feeling certain peculiar effects.

I found the rum bundled in a cupboard, brought half a glass of it and trickled some between the wounded girl's lips. She spluttered and her face screwed up, but her eyes stayed closed and she remained inert. It was a puzzling reaction. Cort was reading the note he'd found and the lines of his jaw were hardening.

"Listen to this, Mac. It's scrawled in pencil, some words misspelled, and it's signed 'Un Amigo.' 'Dear Miss Stebbins,' it begins. Just 'Miss.' Which one could it have been meant for?"

"What does it say?"

"Cormick and Macomber are stealing plenty since your brother died, tricking up the books, faking reports, holding out mucho dinero. I savvy because they did me dirt, so look out for them. I want to see fair play and will tell you how to prove they are two sneaky crooks if you will come to Punta Blanca tomorrow afternoon three sharp. Dangerous, so keep mum and come alone."

It angered and at the same time enlightened me. "That explains it—why they were so close-mouthed and suspicious. They believed that stuff; believed we were putting something over on them, and they wanted to get the goods on us before confronting us. Who the devil fed them that mess of lies?"

The note disappeared inside Cort's clenched fist. "I can guess. In fact, I'm pretty sure who's behind this neat piece of dirty work."

"A fat chance we'll stand of convincing this girl that that note's a phony," I pointed out, "especially now that her sister's been killed. Full of suspicions as she is already, she won't think twice before accusing us of trying to kill

them both in an attempt to cover up. . . . Cort! You mean Taggart? Red Taggart?"

TAGGART, who had once been a marine engineer, was a perpetually drunken bully no longer permitted to set foot on any self-respecting skipper's deck. He'd later been a recruiter in New Guinea and had lost his license through his brutal mistreatment of indentured natives. Under charges of inciting to riot, a result of his barroom fights, he'd been deported from most of the Caribbean islands.

Three weeks after we'd hired him, in a moment of mistaken sympathy aroused by his promises to reform, we'd kicked him out for petty thievery. Since we'd learned at first hand that he was a vindictive schemer—there'd been several fires and other instances of sabotage to the plantation afterward—I felt sure Cort must be right.

"He'd hit back at us through sheer meanness," I agreed, "but why under heaven should he deliberately want to kill two young women who'd never before set foot in this country?"

"This note hides the reason for it," Cort judged at once. "It's not what it seems. He knew nothing to tell the Stebbins sisters about us, except such drunken lies as he could cook up. He could have pumped such stuff into them at Limon, without appointing a rendezvous. His purpose was to draw them to a lonely spot."

"Last night, Mac, within a few hours after they'd gotten off the boat, something happened that made him decide he'd have to kill them, and so—"

I was raising the rest of the rum to my mouth and with nerve-shattering suddenness the glass went to pieces right in front of my face. Not realizing what had happened, I simply found myself holding the jagged bottom while fragments flew and amber liquid dribbled down my chin.

Cort threw himself into a flying tackle and wrenched me to the floor. Sprawled there in blank astonishment, I saw the telephone receiver jump off the hook and dim little spots appear in the wall behind it.

There was no sound of shots. The wind was pounding a deep roll on the drums of the sky and above that rumble was a shrill sharpening whistle. The reports had simply been blown into oblivion.

But the silent bullets kept coming, drilling in through the north wall, striking with almost inaudible impacts in murderously strategic spots. Each hole bled rain. As we were scurrying to pull the girl off the bed another appeared a few inches above her head. Cort and I slid her down with the mattress, but that bullet was the last—for then.

"He wants us all dead now," Cort said.

IV

CORT peered out through one of the holes and I put my eye to another. We saw almost nothing but sluicing gray. Several storage huts sat nearby on the north, quaking all over, dim in the flying downpour.

Taggart—though there was no material evidence whatever to support our belief, we were morally certain it was Taggart—had stationed himself behind one of the huts and perhaps was still there.

Cort opened a closet, put his Luger in my hands, decided against his Scott shotgun in favor of his Enfield .303 for his own use. He loved guns; to him they were old-time comrades who never failed his trust.

He signaled me—the howl of the storm was beginning

to make conversation difficult—and when he sidled out I bore against the door and after two attempts succeeded in hooking the latch. The whole room vibrated and another foamy wave rippled across the floor.

Through a bullet hole I glimpsed Cort bending himself forward step by step, a struggling ghostly figure. The full fury of the blow hadn't yet hit us and if anyone could hang onto the land I felt reasonably sure Cort could manage it.

My part was to watch Miss Stebbins and I did so, revolving slowly on my heels because no sound of an approach would be audible through that all-piercing banshee wail.

Also beginning to feel the strange psychological effects of the pressure, which often causes normal people to behave in a slightly irrational manner, I began to talk to the girl lying on the mattress at my feet. So far she'd shown no signs of returning to her senses and she probably couldn't have heard me clearly even if she'd been conscious, but I talked to her anyway.

"You're dangerous to Taggart. Not simply because he fatally shot the other Miss Stebbins. You've probably never met him, you don't know him by name and, being off by yourself at the moment, you didn't witness the attack on your sister.

"No, it isn't that. There's some other reason for it which I don't know. But here's the way it's shaping up. Taggart meant to kill you, tried, then saw he hadn't pulled it off; and now, because you're still alive and still a menace to him, he's going to do his best to correct the error."

I thought I saw her lids flutter a little, but her face remained placid.

"That's not all," I added. "We must get the rest of it clearly in mind because it's obviously of deadly importance. Taggart thinks Cort and I recognized him at Punta Blanca. That makes Cort and me dangerous to him too. Besides, he probably figures that you've told us something by now—whatever it is you may know about him—something he doesn't want repeated.

"The only way he can save himself, it seems, is to murder the three of us. With the whole country being twisted out of joint by this hurricane—and after-effects will paralyze it for weeks—he stands a swell chance of getting away clear."

Was there a flush now in the girl's cheeks? We were steeped in a purplish gloom and it was as hard to see clearly as it was to hear anything below the scream of the monster vacuum cleaner that was sweeping over us.

But a sound insinuated its way through the uproar and drew me to one of the bullet-cut peepholes. Cort was pushing his way back, head bowed against the driving water, still gripping the rifle. Near him something of big, uncertain shape was crawling. A car!

IT WAS little short of miraculous that the ignition system of any car could continue to function while water streamed over it with fire-hose force, but this one moved a little nearer before it stalled. A man struggled out of it. Cort locked arms with him and they breasted their way together to the door. The storm burst into the room with them and the three of us managed to shove the door back into its frame before it was ripped from its hinges.

The beautiful blue uniform of Esteban Viquez, *teniente* of the provincial police, was thoroughly soaked under his slicker. He struggled for breath while rain ran out of his nostrils: a young, coffee-brown, handsome officer of pure

Spanish blood. He had a strong sense of duty which not even a hurricane could demolish, and as he gasped he looked soberly purposeful.

"*Por amor de Dios!* It had not yet started when I left Limon, *amigos*. It isn't very bad yet, but soon the wind will tear the whole world apart. I am lucky to be inside here, *no es verdad?*"

Water poured off every line of Cort and a trickle came from the barrel of his rifle.

"No sign of anybody out there, Mac," he reported, breathing hard, "but I doubt that he's gone. Hiding somewhere beyond the edge of the clearing, probably. He'll be back."

"Then you're not so lucky to be here after all, *Teniente*," I observed. "Somebody's made up his mind to kill us, and now you've probably added yourself to the list."

"Ah?" said Esteban Viquez with another smile. "Then it is as I feared and I was right to come." He crossed the shaking floor, gazed down at the still girl, nodded vigorously. "Ah!" In the other room he pulled the tarpaulin off the face of the other girl who was dead. "Ah-h," he said sadly. Then he strode back, his dark eyes fiercely lighted, puzzled yet clear. "The one who lives—she is the *Señorita* Sabina Stebbins, no?"

Cort's eyes mirrored the question and I had to shake my head.

"We've still no idea which one she is. I don't understand why she's staying unconscious so long, but so far she hasn't spoken a single word."

"*Por Dios*, it is necessary to know what is the name of this girl!" said the *teniente*. "If she is the *Señorita* Sarilla, then there is no reason why anyone should molest her further. But if she is the *Señorita* Sabina, then there is someone who thinks that she must, as you say, be killed. *Comprende?* Ah, I will try to explain, *amigos*."

WE CONVERSED with a feeling that no words were being spoken. Amid the drumming and the crying of the wind we seemed to be using an unnatural means of mental communication. Esteban Viquez' boots made tracks back and forth across the wet floor while Cort kept an eye near one of the bullet-holes. The injured girl lay quite still, and every time he glanced at her the *teniente's* dark eyes became mystified yet sad.

"Do you know," he asked, "a Hollander, by name Willem van Vreer?"

Neither Cort nor I had ever heard of him.

"He is dead now," Viquez said. "In Limon last night, he was most brutally murdered. No one can say who killed him except, perhaps, this girl. But perhaps not even she. It depends entirely upon which one of the *Señoritas* Stebbins she is. If the one, yes, she knows. If the other, no, she knows not. *Comprende?* Ah, I will explain."

Esteban Viquez strode back and forth from one shaking wall to another, turning frequent glances at the unconscious girl and striving with many gestures to clarify the situation.

"Aboard the *Miñoneta*, the same boat which brought the two *señoritas* yesterday, came the Dutch gentleman Willem van Vreer. It is known that he became friends with the *señoritas* during the voyage from Port of Spain to Port Limon. Like the two *señoritas*, he took a room last night at La Posada del Norte. He was a short man, but fat, and he moved himself about with much difficulties. He leaned himself on a crutch when he walked because

his right leg was contained in a plaster cast. Now we come to the moment of importance!"

Viquez pursed his lips regretfully over the inert girl, then resumed his restless pacing:

"There were several radiograms waiting at the posada for the fat *Holandés*. Last evening he went limping to the office of Tropical Radio, where he sent several answers to a business house in New York. The Dutch Imports Exchange, Limited, it is called. I have since read all these messages, which are in English but difficult to understand. Those from the States hint that he was engaged upon a certain mission of importance and they warned him to take the best care of himself. His answers stated that so far all arrangements were satisfactory and his journey was safe. But within an hour, *amigos*, he was dead with three bullets in his heart."

The whole house quaked. Evidently we had been hit by a solid mass of sand-laden water scooped up from the coast. The foundations held, though an ominous ripping noise began vibrating through the roof.

"Now we arrive at the moment of importance!" Viquez repeated, ignoring the fury of the storm and concentrating on his report. "Returning from the radio office, the Dutch *extranjero* was met outside the hotel by a man. I do not know who was this man. But it is certain an unknown man met the Hollander in the street and induced him to get into a waiting car, perhaps by offering to take him for a short sight-seeing trip.

"I did not see this, though I was sitting only a few yards away, in the bar of the posada. What I saw was something else. It was a *Señorita Stebbins*. *Amigos*, it is necessary that you must understand this situation most clear."

Though the wind was blowing holes through our minds, we pictured it.

"At the exact moment when the unknown man was putting the Dutchman van Vreer into the car, one of the *Señoritas Stebbins* turned from the street to the door of the posada. She saw them, though she was quite unaware of the meaning of the incident. Watching her—but seeing nothing of the two men myself, please to understand—I heard her say, 'Good evening, Mr. van Vreer.' And I heard him answer her, 'Ah, good evening! This is Miss Sabina, is it not?' I heard her laugh a little and say, 'Yes, I am Sabina. Good night.' Now! *Comprende?* The *Señorita Sabina* saw the man who was with the Dutchman and soon the Dutchman was quite dead."

"Then Miss Sabina can identify that man as van Vreer's murderer," Cort said.

V

ESTEBAN VIQUEZ nodded with great vigor. "At that moment, of course, she did not dream that anyone was about to be killed. She merely strolled into the posada and ascended to her room where her sister was no doubt waiting. The man took the Dutchman away in the car.

"When we found him this afternoon, *amigos*, it was strange. The plaster cast was gone from his leg. I have decided that it was carefully broken off and carried away before he was thrown into the water."

"His cast stolen!" I blurted. "Was his leg really hurt?"

"*Sí, amigos*, actually the leg had been broken and was healing. I was told by another passenger, to whom the Dutchman himself told it, that the leg was the result

of a misstep on a slippery deck while van Vreer was traveling to the America of the South from, I believe, West Africa."

"It being a real injury, the cast would make an especially good hiding place for something," Cort said. "Somebody must have been watching the Dutchman—somebody who drew his own conclusions as to the meaning of those radiograms. Evidently the Dutchman was carrying something to the States, and his murderer stole it from him."

"Ah, it is too possible," Viquez sighed. "Even while the Dutchman was limping from the radio office back to the posada, his room was ransacked. Finding nothing there, the criminal learned that the valuables must be on the lame man's person."

"The most important thing now," Cort said, "is that the murderer knew that Sabina Stebbins could point him out."

"As soon as we found the unfortunate Dutchman's body floating in the water, I realized this," said the *teniente*. "Knowing that the *señoritas* have come here, I made haste to follow. And still I have learned nothing more." His shrug said he was in a most unhappy plight.

"Most of it's pretty clear, Cort," I said. "The note was written and slipped under their door last night with the idea of drawing them into a trap."

"But it's not as simple as that," Cort answered thoughtfully. "The man knew a girl had seen him, knew he'd have to shut her up. So, after killing the Dutchman and stealing the plaster cast with whatever was hidden inside it, he came back. Without arousing suspicion, he could inquire, 'Who is the girl named Sabina?' and he would be told, of course, 'She's Miss Sabina Stebbins.'

"Her name being the same as Bart's, her position would automatically become clear, especially if Taggart is the man. But the fact that the note was addressed to only one of the sisters, not to both of them together, means a lot. Do you see that, Mac?"

"Not quite," I confessed.

Cort was shouting through the shrieks of the wind and I had that strange sense of not actually hearing his voice.

"It means that the man who'd killed van Vreer didn't know there were two girls exactly alike in appearance. He went to Punta Blanca thinking there was only one girl involved. Now visualize it from his standpoint, Mac. He's there, hiding, gun ready. He sees a girl appear. He shoots her."

"Ah-h," said the *teniente* in a grieved tone.

"Feeling that he has now safely eliminated the only witness in the case of the dead Dutchman, he begins to crawl away. Then suddenly standing there before him is the second girl, looking so much like the first that she might be her ghost. Sight of her rocks the killer on his heels. The next moment, of course, he grasps the fact that he's dealing with twins.

"He has already killed one of them; but is that one Sabina, the witness he'd meant to eliminate? He has no way of knowing whether she is or is not. Maybe he's already silenced the witness, but on the other hand maybe it's the second sister who's really the dangerous one. Being desperate to save himself, he has no choice but to kill them both."

"If he'd succeeded, the danger would be removed and he'd be far afield by now," I reasoned. "But since he didn't actually kill the second sister, he still doesn't know whether

or not she's the witness. So, instead of escaping, he's still trying—"

CORT bent over the girl. She remained as still as before while he again searched her pockets. Finding nothing, he shook her. The response was thoroughly negative. He peered at me and I answered with a baffled gesture toward the first-aid kit. Since the hospital at Limon was easily accessible under normal conditions, the kit was inadequate for such an emergency as this. And anyway, I was no medicine man.

"She might be faking," I said. "Maybe she's scared out of her wits and is trying to avoid further trouble by playing possum, like a little kid hiding under the bed-covers. It would be just like her. But on the other hand she might be seriously hurt. If we try doctoring her ourselves we might do the wrong thing and make her worse. She ought to be at the hospital, getting her head X-rayed. Meantime we'd better leave her strictly alone."

Cort was again peering out one of the bullet-holes. It spat at him viciously and I saw him grow tense. He spun about, caught up his rifle, signaled me to follow and Viquez to remain with the girl. The *teniente* had a devil of a fight getting the door closed again behind us.

Cort and I forced ourselves out into the blasting torrent which still had a good part of the scale to climb before it would reach its height.

The rain came horizontally, a roaring rapids, and we crept backward against it; for to face it would probably mean drowning as Bert Stebbins had drowned. The visible world extended only a few feet around us. It flickered like an old-time movie. Each breath and each step was a struggle won.

The flowing air was cluttered with debris that flicked past us: giant banana fronds, a whole uprooted criollo tree. To get struck by any sizable object would simply mean getting whisked away with it, never again to be seen.

When we reached the first hut we were crawling on hands and knees. There was scarcely any shelter inside, for the door was gone and just as we crept under the roof half of it lifted off and soared away.

"Saw him going in here!" Cort's voice was almost lost though he shouted with his lips at my ear. "Had time to get out again!"

He pointed into a corner. The box of dynamite was no longer where we stored it. A long coil of waterproof fuse was also missing. Several charred wooden matches were floating at our feet. Possibly they meant that Taggart had managed to light one end of the fuse and presently would cut off a length of it as needed. But as to where and how Taggart really meant to use the stuff, we could only guess.

CORT started out again. There was an even chance that none of us would survive the hurricane, but Taggart considered that the odds weren't strong enough in his favor. Dynamite would make certain. Stuffed under the house, for example, it would leave nothing but trash to be swept instantly away by the wind.

Afterward there would be no indication whatever that an explosive had really done the job. The rending wind and the cutting water would naturally be blamed. Taggart need never worry that his guilt might catch up with him.

The dread that Taggart was working at the house now sent Cort back. We braced each other, feeling ourselves

crawling along the slippery rim of Hell itself. A few moments' casual stroll in normal weather, it was today a battle against a maelstrom on earth. Flinging ourselves against the shaking wall of the house, almost lost from each other, we crept from corner to corner.

There was no hint of Taggart's presence until, almost completing the circuit, we found the door crazily banging, the full force of the onslaught pouring into the house.

Somehow we felt that Esteban Viquez was screaming. Shouldering in the door, we at first saw nothing of him. The darkness inside, thick with rain, blinded us. The floor was swamped, the whole house seemed to burst like a toy balloon, or about to be sucked whole into a thundering void.

Abruptly I realized that Cort was straddled, rifle leveled, shooting into the wall of the bedroom where the girl lay. He sent the bullet drilling through at a level too high to harm the girl but high enough to hit a man standing near the bed, if a man were in there.

Taggart came out so swiftly that he was scarcely more than a flitting phantom. Unhurt, and springing around the furniture piled in the center of the room, he cracked his gun against my temple at a moment when I was off balance. I went flat, striking my head again, and lay there, beginning to drown.

Then Esteban Viquez' left arm was under my neck, he was holding my nose out of the dirty bubbling tide, and I saw Cort grappling with Taggart in a splashing welter.

Taggart leaped up, his hands empty, his gun lost. A strip of his shirt ripped off in Cort's fist. He ducked into the slashing flow at the door and disappeared.

I found my knees and Viquez dragged himself behind me toward Cort. We sidled out and made a circuit of the house while clinging flat to the walls. It was almost impossible to see, and we found no new sign of Taggart, no indication that the dynamite had been placed under the house. Perhaps he had cached it after stealing it from the hut, and we still couldn't know how he meant to use it against us.

Cort and Viquez and I had a little trouble finding the door, for on that side of the house there was no longer a porch. While our attention was momentarily elsewhere the wind had snatched it off.

Finding the door torn loose, the three of us slapped it upright against the inside wall, then slid it into position. It functioned like a closing valve. While the *teniente* and I held it, Cort piled furniture against it. We scarcely expected it to hold, but it was holding—so far. Even though the wind kept screaming outside and the water kept lashing, the room seemed almost quiet now.

Esteban Viquez' both arms hung useless. There was a bullet in his right shoulder and another in his left bicep, and he looked sheepishly apologetic. Dizzy and gasping, I was finding it hard to keep my feet. Cort was still moving with dogged purpose and, I saw, had stuffed the section of Taggart's shirt into his hip pocket.

THE girl had revived. We noted this without surprise in a scheme of things which had no surprises left. She was sitting on the floor, bracing herself against the wall, very pale, her eyes blue and big. We couldn't know how long Taggart had been within reach of her, but Cort's rifle bullet had driven him off so quickly that he hadn't had a chance to kill her. She simply sat there, shivering but strangely unafraid—too stunned, I thought, to feel fear—

and stared at us. She stared without saying a word.

The thunder of the storm was too great now, so Cort didn't try to question her. Some of the water was leaking out through the cracks of the floor, disclosing the whereabouts of Viquez' automatic and Taggart's. Cort put one into my hands, making two for me, and kept the other. We tried to listen, to learn somehow if Taggart, now deprived of all but one weapon, was cramming the dynamite into the foundations somewhere.

Cort watched the girl and we all prowled, hoping that some miracle would warn us if Taggart had the dynamite under the house.

Perhaps this was as bad as the blow would get. We couldn't know for sure. The house was a rather frail structure, and we were all aware that a hurricane can drive water through a slab of solid concrete. It was taking such punishment that it might fly to pieces at any moment. A sea was running all around us, and we were filled with that complete hopelessness which is like no other hopelessness in life. There was nothing we could do about it but cower and wait.

It was an emotional third degree, and the three of us were prowling like insane animals. I saw Cort gazing at the girl with an incredulous smile and his lips forming the words, "She's beautiful, beautiful." At first she had seemed "almost good-looking" but now her beauty practically surpassed description! We were all actually a little crazy then. Yes, this, we hoped, was the worst of it.

Now the house was twisting. It was as if the structure were a flimsy berry-box under a Gargantuan's foot. With no audible sound of crackling or splitting, it was being crushed down upon us.

But the whim of the hurricane shifted. The walls settled at a leaning angle and the roof began to disappear, bit by bit, swiftly. One ragged section after another simply vanished, each in a flash, until about one-third of it was left. The huddling girl remained somewhat sheltered, but upon the rest of us the howling deluge poured.

Then suddenly, so suddenly that it came as a stupefying shock, there was no wind and no rain. Not the faintest whisper of air stirred and all sound was gone. It was an utterly complete silence, without a note of a bird's song or the hum of an insect. The storm had stopped to draw a fresh breath, and the soundlessness crushed us even while warning us that soon—no one could know how soon—the whole show would start all over again.

VI

FOR a moment we were perfectly motionless inside that shell of a house, and Cort's voice came like a strange sound we'd never heard before. "Miss Stebbins," he said, "are you all right?"

Miss Stebbins sat on the floor, still very pale, her blue eyes still big, and did not answer.

"Are you Miss Sabina Stebbins?" Cort asked. "Miss Sabina, the one who saw Taggart with van Vreer?"

If she understood the English language she gave no indication of it. To me she was like a willful child whose cat had gotten her tongue. Her whole body was shivering, and it was strange that she seemed so self-possessed; but this, I thought again, was undoubtedly due to the fact that she was in the same condition as a fighter who is out on his feet. Too stunned to comprehend or answer, and really unaware of what was going on, I judged, she

simply sat there and stared at us. It made me uneasy.

Seeming astonished that he still possessed a voice himself, Esteban Viquez explained, "I am so ashamed, *amigos mios*. Señor Taggart burst in upon me with such a quickness that I had scarcely the time required to raise my gun. He shot me only twice because he was in haste to reach the *señorita*. He was a little mad, like the rest of us, and I felt that he would really like to be finished with his killings, if that were possible.

"I saw him seize the girl and shout at her. 'What is your name? Are you Sabina? What is your name?' She sat as she is sitting now, and stared at him and uttered not a sound. If she is not Señorita Sabina, but, instead Señorita Sarilla, she might actually have saved herself by speaking, but she did not speak."

"To Taggart's way of looking at it we came in at exactly the wrong time," Cort said, his eyes still admiring and puzzling over the silent girl. "We not only stopped him from killing her, but forced him to expose himself to us for the first time. Now he'll certainly have to kill all four of us."

The girl must have heard this, but she simply continued to sit and watch us.

I was gazing around in blank wonder. "It's the eye of the hurricane," I found myself mumbling. "The hole in the doughnut of the storm. This lull will last a few hours at most, or maybe a few minutes. Then we'll have the wind again from the opposite direction."

Of course I was telling Cort and the *teniente* something they already knew better than I. "This is just the intermission between the acts."

Cort, glancing again at the girl, was pulling the section of Taggart's shirt out of his pocket. The ragged piece contained a pocket of its own, which was buttoned and stuffed with something heavy. It was a handkerchief wrapped around a big handful of something that looked like gravel. Cort and the *teniente* stared at it with understanding while I merely blinked.

"Uncut diamonds," Cort said. "Broken out of van Vreer's cast—bits of plaster still clinging to them."

"Van Vreer was a smuggler?" I guessed. "Was this a tricky way of getting the diamonds into the States?"

CORT wagged his head. "I don't think so. The invasion of Holland wasn't entirely unexpected. When the Nazis arrived they found empty vaults and tills. An evacuation of business and wealth had been secretly going on for weeks. The Dutch are canny people; they'd spirited away their gold, their securities, the stocks of diamonds in their cutting houses. Everything was scattered, to England, to the States, to Batavia; and these pebbles—a fortune—are part of it.

"Van Vreer was carrying them a roundabout way to new offices set up in New York. When he broke his leg he took advantage of the plaster cast as a hiding place. Taggart's shrewd. He'd read of this too, and had figured it all out. The whole thing being so secret in nature, he'd have gotten away with it if Sabina Stebbins hadn't unintentionally gummed up the works."

"Now, to top off his troubles, he's lost his loot," I said. "He'll get it back if he can. But if he has to blow it to all points of the compass along with us, he'll do that."

"There will be a reward, no doubt, for the return of these jewels," said the *teniente*. "A large reward, perhaps sufficient to restore the plantation."

"A fat chance we have of collecting it!" I said.

Cort was rewrapping the diamonds, stuffing them back into his sodden pants. He kneeled beside the girl, took one of her cold hands, smiled. Perhaps, I thought, it was a severe case of amnesia. She gazed at Cort with calm curiosity as he spoke.

"Are you Sabina Stebbins? We're your friends, you know. We want to help you. We must know which of the two sisters you are. Are you Sabina Stebbins, or Sarilla?"

She said, very quietly, "I'm Sabina."

VIQUEZ groaned and Cort's chin set. Not possibly, I thought, could the girl realize the full meaning of what she'd said. In those two words she'd told us that her sister had been killed without reason and that her own death was highly necessary to Taggart. Calmer than any of the rest of us, she kept searching curiously into Cort's eyes.

"You're Sabina," he said. "You're the girl who saw a red-headed man named Taggart with your friend van Vreer last night."

"Yes," she said.

Cort turned to us decisively. "We can't stay here. In Limon it will be much safer for Miss Sabina. There'll be more protection, and she needs medical care. You also need a bit of repairing at the hospital, *Teniente*. We're starting out for Limon."

"You're crazy, Cort!" I protested. "The road's certainly blocked and probably entirely gone. You know as well as I do that the cardinal rule of how to behave during a hurricane is never to go out during a lull. A few minutes or a few hours—nobody can tell when the second half of it will start up. We might have time to get to Limon somehow, but the chances are much better that we won't make it."

"We'll never outlast it here," Cort answered. "Either the storm or Taggart will get us. We're starting out for Limon right now."

He dragged the furniture away from the door and went out. A weird world spread before us. Every bush and blade of grass was raked flat. Half the criollos were gone, the rest whipped to earth. Stumps of palms were all around, the trunks snapped off like matches. Dead fish, blown up from the sea, were strewn about the yard, and there was one drowned crocodile.

The inexplicable vagaries of the wind had left some of the blacks' huts untouched. Their moaning chant was rising again, and the only other sound was the water running down from the high places.

The *teniente's* car had disappeared. The heavier truck had been picked up and put down a hundred feet away, still on its wheels. Rusty water was dripping from it everywhere, particularly from its nose. The grill was punctured. Taggart had put more bullets into the radiator.

"Even if it'll go, even if the road's clear, the bearings will burn out in a few miles, Cort," I said. "We're crazy to try to get to Limon."

But we were going. Cort dragged the Stebbins trunks from the truck, tossed the bags out, kicked the absurd gourds into a corner. Coming back, he put cartridges for the Enfield into his pocket. Our supply of them was almost exhausted—there were only half a dozen left—but of shotgun shells we had an abundance. He loaded my arm with boxes of them, and I put them in the truck. He

added the first-aid kit. I thought he was still a little daffy from the wind.

We wiped off the spark plugs and tried the engine. The battery was weak; its charge was probably leaking off through the salt water on it, or its solution was diluted. When it was about to die the motor coughed. A few minutes more and the battery was entirely gone.

Cort used the crank. In this completely crazy world we finally got the engine going. Probably, however, it would sneeze off at any moment, because of water blown in through the tiny vent of the petrol tank.

Miss Stebbins responded obediently when Cort took her hand. Drenched and still shivering, she allowed him to wrap a blanket around her. He'd managed to find a reasonably dry one deep inside a chest. He carried her to the truck, put in a comfortable sitting position inside, then helped the *teniente* in beside her. Gazing at his traveling companion and thinking very sadly of her future, Estaban Viquez said, "Ah-h, ah-h."

His rifle looking for Taggart over the tailgate, Cort joined them. I took the wheel. We were off for Limon. Off on a direct highway to seven varieties of hell.

ALMOST at once we met an obstruction. An uprooted coco palm lay straight across the road. We climbed out, keeping an eye peeled for Taggart, and managed to drag it far enough aside so that I could crowd the wheels past. A few yards farther on there was another. Again we were able to shift it.

I anticipated that the whole length of the road would be barricaded in this way, but the next stretch was pleasantly long. Still, even the open stretches were hard going. The rushing water had turned the ruts into deep gashes. The differential bumped, the sump scraped and the motor was rapidly reaching the point where its own heat would disable it.

"You see, Miss Sabina," Cort said, "practically all we have left of the plantation is the land. Everything else is wiped out. It means a new beginning, a long pull. It'll be a heartbreaking job, and once we start it you'll learn that there'll be no time for writing a diary, let alone detailed reports of daily progress."

The girl said nothing. Under the circumstances, I felt, Cort was being a bit overly optimistic as to our prospects. Personally I had no expectations of ever planting another criollo.

"It isn't the physical labor that gets you," he went on explaining to the wordless Miss Stebbins. "The blacks do all of that. It's the climate, and everything that goes with it, that wear you down. Keeping your plants alive and healthy is a moral issue. When a seedling dies you feel you've lost a member of your family. When the wind breaks up a tree, you wish it had been one of your own limbs instead. Everything conspires to break your body and soul. If you let it, it will. Since all this is so strange to you, Miss Stebbins, I think you must ask yourself at the very beginning whether you can take it."

Miss Stebbins spoke again, adding to the three words she had so far uttered. "You'll see," she said.

There was more debris to be cleared away. Cort had to help push us out of a transverse gully that hadn't been there before. The hot motor was crackling. We now came to a long, slow curve down which we could coast. I eyed the terrain on the right—a rolling jungle of broken tree stumps and fallen trunks, an entanglement offering ex-

cellent shelter to an attacker, I saw with apprehension.

It was not far from the plantation; by short-cutting across, Taggart might already have hidden himself in it. The thought was no sooner in my mind than the real danger materialized.

Something twirled through the air, something that looked like a short rod with a few inches of rope attached. It landed in the road sixty feet ahead and lay there sputtering.

Howling an incoherent warning, I jammed on the brakes. The linings were saturated with water, slippery. The moisture acted as a lubricant. With the brakes hard on, we rolled down the slope with unslackened speed. I tried crazily to get into reverse gear and couldn't. It seemed impossible that we should be very far from the dynamite when it let go, and very possibly we'd be directly over it.

Cort was scrambling out, hustling the girl over the tailgate. The *teniente*, unable to use his arms, heaved himself upon his knees and simply fell out head first. I left the wheel with a leap. The four of us were tumbling like tenpins at the moment the dynamite exploded.

VII

THE concussion seemed not too violent, compared with the half of a hurricane we'd just been through. Choking smoke rolled over us, earth and rocks pelted down. When we raised our heads at last we found that the truck had stopped with its nose deep in a crater.

Cort was up at once, heading into the shattered bush. There were scrambling noises beyond, indicating Taggart's retreat. We glimpsed him once, for an instant, hugging a bundle of dynamite under one arm, the fuse coiled over one shoulder. Cort with the *teniente's* automatic, I with Taggart's and Cort's Luger, blasted at every flicker of motion.

Taggart seemed to have been swallowed up in the confusion of splintered trunks and stumps. Holed in somewhere, he was waiting for us to exhaust our ammunition.

"There aren't many bullets left in either of these guns," I said as we backed to the road. Cort's Luger was almost empty too, I knew. "Guns aren't much good anyway when you can't find anything to draw a bead on. He can sneak up behind these woodpiles and sling his dynamite without showing so much as a hair."

"We can't go ahead on foot," Cort said, his eyes alert. "Miss Sabina's too weak for that, and Viquez is in bad shape. Taggart could follow us, and besides we wouldn't stand a chance in the open when the wind hits again. The truck's the best shelter within reach. We'll have to stay inside it."

The girl was helping the *teniente* into the truck. He was feeling the shock of his wounds and he sagged out flat on his back. The next time a stick of dynamite came our way he wouldn't be able to get out of its vicinity. For one of us to attempt to move him would probably be fatal to both.

Without the danger of Taggart we might worm the truck out of the crater and, even with its motor melting to pieces, reach Limon eventually; but as it was we couldn't avoid offering him a hulking target. Our immediate problem was to keep him beyond throwing range; and since the tangle of the jungle overlapped the edge of the road, offering Taggart a hundred merging entrenchments, it looked like a tall order.

Cort handed me the Scott and a box of shells.

"Perch up top of the cab, Mac, and blast away at anything that might be a man."

He boosted me up. The position offered practically no advantage. The tangle all around was chaotic. If the lull held out, I could regard any moving thing as a legitimate target, but already the air was beginning to swirl a little. There was a confusion of stirrings, any one of which might be Taggart. I kept hammering at as many as I could, first one barrel, then the other, promptly reloading.

When the box of shells was empty I asked for another. Cort handed one up and I resumed the cannonade, not knowing whether I was coming anywhere near Taggart.

Something was going on inside the truck. I heard a brittle, scraping sound, and the girl asked, "May I help?" The *teniente* was watching whatever Cort was doing, and mumbled, "I have a knife, *señorita*." The queer noises went on, including a hollow rattle. Concerned with keeping my eyes on the jungle and my gun hot, I asked for and got a third carton of shells. Presently I called down that I could use a fourth.

"That's all, Mac," Cort said.

"All!" I blurted. "We have at least a dozen more boxes. As soon as I stop shooting Taggart will creep up."

"Let him come."

Understanding none of this, except that Cort was somehow inviting the attack I'd been trying my best to stave off, I dropped down. He was busy at a strange job.

HE'D dragged the Stebbins' collection of decorated gourds into the center of the floor. He'd cut a small hole in one of them, much as you'd plug a watermelon. He'd also hacked up all the rest of our shotgun shells. Pouring the powder and shot into the gourd, he dropped the brass cap in after it.

The girl, using the *teniente's* knife, was aiding him and now the gourd was full. Taking a roll of adhesive tape from the first-aid kit, he sealed the opening. I realized, then, that he had treated half a dozen other gourds in this same manner. He put two of them into my hands, stuffed two partway into his pockets and was about to take up the last pair when the girl seized them.

"Use your automatics, Mac, to drive him back a little," Cort said while I stared at him as if he'd really gone mad. "Place these gourds at scattered points where they can all be seen from the truck, but not seen by Taggart. Perhaps you'd better give me those, Miss Stebbins. You're scarcely equal to—"

"I can do it," Miss Stebbins said.

There was still no sign of Taggart. Cort and I fired at random as we twisted our way into the tangle. Miss Stebbins moved between us with a certain doggedness. The wind was quickening with the continued movement of the hurricane as a whole, and very soon we would again be in the thick of it. When we had struggled ahead about two hundred feet Cort signaled a halt. His Luger was empty now, and so were both the automatics I had.

Cort placed one of his gourds on a stump. Twenty yards toward one side I put another on a mound. Miss Stebbins placed hers against a log nearby. Retreating, watching for the warning flicker of a missile twirling through the air, Cort and I placed our last gourds nearer the road. The six positions roughly formed an arc. Cort's idea, I judged, was to mine the bush against Taggart's approach, though I could see no way of igniting the makeshift bombs.

Back in the road, Cort helped the girl inside the truck and took up his Enfield. It was the only useful firearm he had left, and we had at most half a dozen cartridges.

Taggart remained as invisible and elusive as before, though we were still certain he was still somewhere near. The fact that we were no longer firing would invite him to creep closer. Another single stick of dynamite, tossed with reasonably good aim and with a five-second fuse, would finish his job for him.

Cort crouched inside the truck at the tail-gate, one of those precious cartridges in the breech of the Enfield. He watched the jungle, which was darkening and stirring more fitfully now, and the rifle was cocked.

Miss Stebbins became unexpectedly articulate.

"Mr. Cormick," she said soberly, "I have a confession to make. Two of them, in fact."

His gaze still sweeping in all points at which Taggart might show, Cort answered. "Yes, Miss Stebbins?"

"Mr. Macomber was right about me. I was playing possum part of the time. I recovered consciousness shortly after you brought me to the house."

I stared at her in exasperation. "And did you do it for the reason I said—because you were afraid?"

"I was afraid, but that wasn't the real reason," Miss Stebbins answered. "You see, that note made me suspicious. I reasoned that if you thought I was unconscious I'd perhaps learn the truth about you. And I did. Of course I know now that the note was nothing but falsehoods, and I began to see your side of the problems of maintaining a plantation."

"You'd very soon have learned all about them anyway," I assured her. "I hope you're more or less satisfied now that Cort and I are not a couple of indolent incompetents."

"I'm quite sure," Miss Stebbins said.

CORT lifted the rifle, hesitated, lowered it again. The wind was coming. When it struck this time there wouldn't be any such gradual buildup as before. We'd get the full power of it almost at once. It was growing darker, which was giving Taggart a greater advantage. Cort kept the rifle ready and watched.

"The other confession I have to make," Miss Stebbins said quietly, "is that I'm not really Sabina."

The startled *teniente* raised his head, my jaw dropped and Cort gave her a quick, searching glance.

"You're not what?" I snapped.

"I'm not Sabina," she explained. "I'm really Sarilla."

"You're *not* the girl who's an eye-witness against Taggart, then!" I blurted.

"No, I'm not."

Viquez moaned, and dropped his head. Cort, very still, had a faint smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. My own reaction was not so restrained.

"Do you realize what you've done?" I snapped at the girl. "If Taggart had learned about this in some way at the very beginning, he'd never have come after you. By pretending to be unconscious, or speechless, you provoked him to these attacks. It's far too late now, but there in the house, when Taggart in his desperation demanded to know your name—Do you remember what the *teniente* said about that? 'She might actually have saved herself by speaking, but she did not speak.' Good Lord, Miss Stebbins, didn't you realize what you were doing?"

"I think I did, Mr. Macomber," she said.

"Then why in the name of Heaven didn't you let the

news get back to Taggart in the first place, which would have prevented all this?"

"Because he'd murdered my sister. Because he'd also damaged the plantation and would do it again. Because he'd have gotten away with it unless something kept him within reach. The only hope of bringing punishment upon was to let him go one believing I was the girl he must kill."

At that instant Cort's rifle lifted. In the darkening, shaking snare of the jungle I saw the same furtive movement that had caught his eyes. It was already gone. Taggart had shifted to a closer position. He'd come near enough so that he could easily toss more dynamite at the truck, with small chance of missing. Down now behind a pile of stumps and logs, he was beyond the reach of even the Enfield's powerful bullets.

But it wasn't toward Taggart's probable position that Cort was aiming. His sights were lined up on one of the gourds.

THE rifle cracked, and its repeated sound set off a series of blasts like a string of firecrackers bigger than was ever made. There was a shattering explosion among the fallen trees, then another thirty yards away, then a third behind and between these two.

With the shocks the realization came to me of how Cort had planned it. The bullets drilling into the gourds were almost certain to strike one of the percussion caps of the many shells he had crowded into each. The closely crammed powder ignited in this way, each of the hitherto silly gourds became a deadly shrapnel bomb.

But their thunderclaps were not all of it. There was a fourth blast, even more powerful, at a position where we had planted none of the gourds. I felt the cold certainty that something had vanished from existence there amid the smoke, and I remembered that Taggart had been carrying perhaps a dozen sticks of our dynamite under one arm.

Then, as if Cort's rifle were a signal gun starting an endless series of eruptions, the hurricane hit again.

Suddenly it was all around us—the horizontally sheeting rain, the debris flashing past, the deep drums in the sky and the fiendish whine. We huddled deep in the truck, rocked and whipped and soaked. I thought that perhaps the truck would stay there, that the water would eat away the crater until it was a wider hole from which we could crawl. If this second half of the blow was no worse than the first, we'd be able to ride it out and eventually get to Limon.

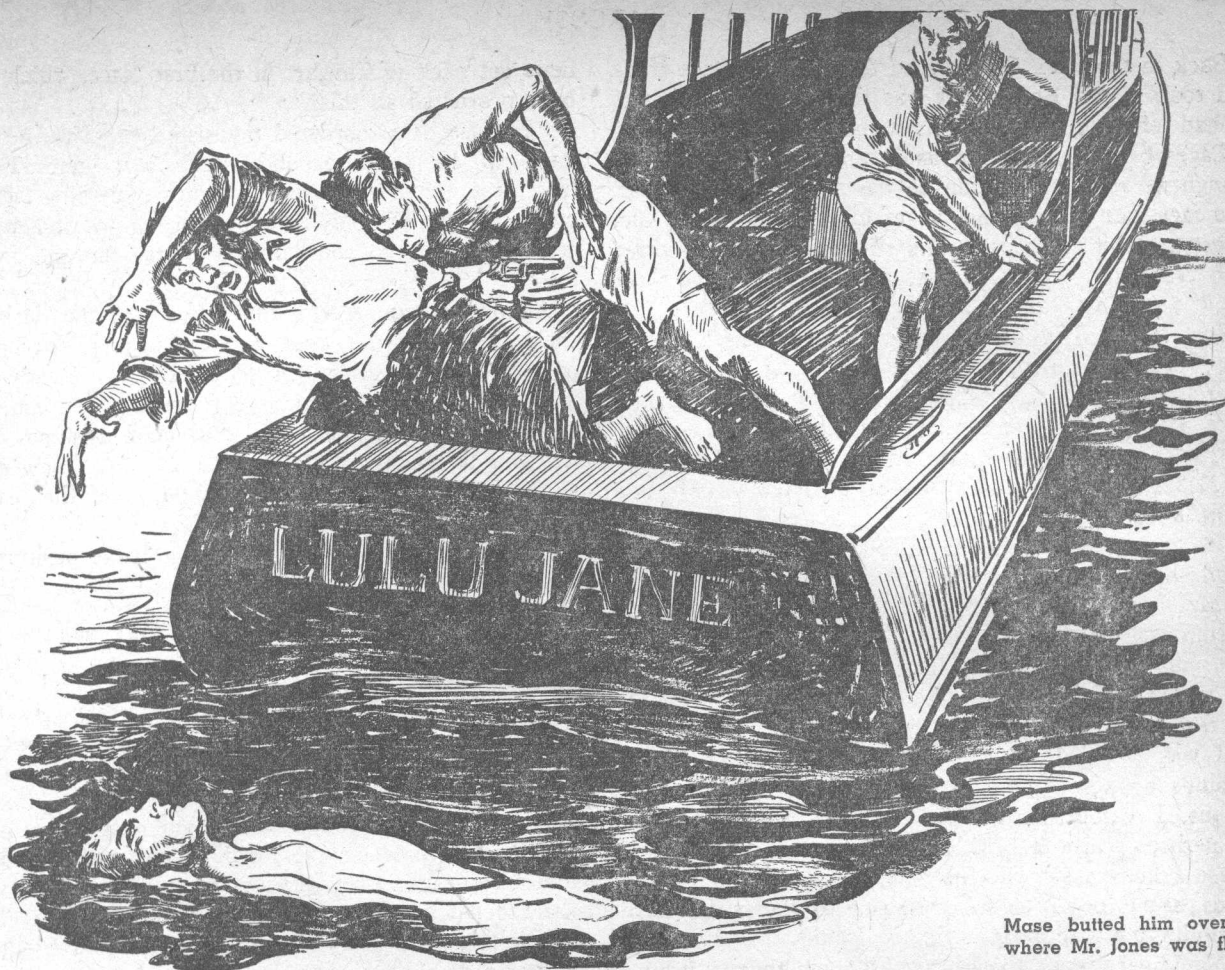
But this hopeful speculation was cut short when, seeing Miss Stebbins huddling close to Cort, I felt my anger surged up again.

"You asked Taggart to try to kill you and it's not his fault he didn't oblige you!" I yelled at her. "You were crazy, deliberately taking a chance like that!"

Cort was smiling and, deep among the wet blankets, his hand was closed over Sarilla Stebbins'.

"But she accomplished what she meant to do, Mac, and it took both brains and courage," he said. "Speaking as we were of having what it takes, Sarilla has demonstrated that she's completely equipped. We didn't see it at the time, but from the very beginning she showed it—even in her letters."

Esteban Viquez, brown face lifted and grinning his broadest, sighed silently but happily. "Ah-h!"



Mase butted him overboard, where Mr. Jones was floating

Davy Jones' Brother

Nobody but Mase McKay would talk back to an octopus on the ocean floor—or offer a drink to a deep-water ghost

By Charles Tenney Jackson

Author of "Buryin' Pants", "Hold That Bull", etc.

LITTLE Bill Shank met Mase McKay at the Overseas Highway bridge with the message from Big Bill, the charterboat captain, owner of the *Lulu Jane*. Mase saw holes in the story at once, but he didn't mention them to the skipper's kid. Little Bill was trying to get around something without exactly lying about it.

"The old man's got a trip out—three fellers that want a try for sailfish. He brought 'em around from Key West. And now he's took sick but he needs that money, and he said that maybe you'd take this party out today, him bein' so sick."

"Yeah?" said Mase. "Big Bill sick? Now, boy, I ain't no sailfish guide. I'm a hand that wants action, not baitin' hundred dollar tackle and warmin' coffee fer any tourist bunch. Sick, eh?"

He didn't tell little Bill that his dad hadn't acted sick last night at the Inlet beer joint after he'd brought the *Lulu Jane* in. Bill Shank had been disturbed, uneasy, star-

ing at Mase as if he wanted to talk and had reasons not to.

Mase was all set to go back to his deep glades home on Jigger Key this morning, but now he could use a piece of Shank's charterboat money, what with a few dice machines and poker hands at the Inlet.

The only thing was that Bill hadn't acted sick then, and he wasn't an owner who'd let such a trim craft as the *Lulu* go out in the charge of a wild guy like Mase McKay. Then, too, this Key West charter party had spent the night on the boat at the bridge dock instead of turning up at the Inlet Inn beer festivities where all good eggs would gather after a day out on the Gulf Stream.

"They was all in," little Bill explained. "Didn't strike a sail, and got all burned and sore. But they want to go out again today. Dad said it was ten for you and he'd furnish everything. He said take these folks where they want and show 'em a good time."

"That ten bucks is the only good time I see in it." Mase grinned. "Now, it's funny about Bill. I better go talk to him about it. He knows I'm not licensed fer anything but a Seminole dugout, even if I do know boats. It's out my territory."

"He knew it. He said nothin'd be said about it. This

party takes care of it. They got big money. But you can't see the old man, for he's gone to Florida City to see a doctor."

"Yeah?" said Mase. "And he left it to you, kid? Musta been sure sick of somethin' he didn't like. Well, mebbe I will."

He stood up the Inlet counter man for two cups of coffee and hot cakes, borrowed a dollar at the filling station, rolled a cigarette and strolled down to the bridge dock.

Westward from the Inlet and the coastal mangrove keys the channel straggled into big grass country, and it was no spot for sailfish. It was no spot for a booze party, nor women, nothin' like that; and Mase figured that was what Bill Shank had got into. Maybe there'd been a fight on board, some kind of rookus that a local owner didn't want to be mixed in but couldn't afford to squawk about to the charter party.

"Some them tourist guys jest take big-game fishin' fer a chance to cut up out where nobody knows or cares—if they square the skipper," Mase thought. "Bill's got a party he can't afford to drop. An' I can handle a bunch o' souses, he thinks. Only it's funny he'd let anybody handle his boat; he sure is proud an' careful o' the *Lulu Jane*."

BILL SHANK'S *Lulu* looked bright and trim as ever.

The iron pulpit was fixed on the extreme bow, where sometimes parties tried their hands at harpooning purpose, when they'd tired of drifting for gamefish from the two swivel seats in the cockpit. Gear and rods all stowed, the roomy cabin neat, the decks shipshape.

Mase had expected he'd first have to clean up, but the *Lulu* didn't look like she'd got in late from a day with sailfish. The two guests aboard were having a quiet drink when they saw him coming. One was a sort of sickly man, dark and thin but hardfaced. The other was big and blondish, and no sunburn on him at all. They looked up quickly from their low-toned talk, and the thin man waved a hand.

"You're the new guide?"

"My general reputation is guidin' myself into grief," Mase grinned. "But I can git around. Bill left it to me. Ready to start?"

"Right. Sooner the better. No luck yesterday. Shank met us at Key West and took us over to what he called Strangler's Cut."

"Hell!" said Mase. "That ain't sailfish water! Bill knows it."

"Well," said the thin man, laughing, "we didn't care. Just drifting around in those channels. My name's Devlin. This is Doc Steger. He never got a big fish strike in his life. It's his party."

Steger didn't look comfortable. He was big and hearty, but there were puffs under his eyes as if he hadn't slept well. He smiled evasively. "I get a sailfish today, or else I'm through."

"Not in Strangler Cut. It's all coral ridges and shoals. Where's your other party? Shank said there were three. Is he ready to go out?"

Steger looked startled. Devlin's eyes narrowed and he forced a laugh. "He quit us last night. Jones couldn't stand the rolling outside. Maybe he got a bit sore at us ribbing him about his fishing. Danny was a good egg but not on salt water. He took the late bus to Miami. We'll have a get together with him at the Club Bali tomorrow."

"Old Danny Jones," said Steger. "Davy's brother. He shouldn't have been out on this after a week of Havana. We all came up from there, but game fishing don't help a hangover. He'll feel better now."

"Have a drink, McKay," said Devlin carelessly, and they passed up Davy Jones' brother. "We want to run back to Strangler's Cut."

"Strangler?" grunted Mase and he turned from the motor tryout. "It ain't game-fish water. Sharks and barracuda feedin' the tides through the coral. Okay, we can go through the pass to deeper water. I'm no game-fish guide but I know the shore channels and bays west."

He gauged the gas, started the engine, idled it and cast off the moorings. At his last glimpse of the bridge dock he saw little Bill Shank staring after his father's boat with a wild look under his freckles. Mase waved; good, hardy coast kid was little Bill.

He held the wheel until they cleared the mangrove points and mud bottoms and the last channel marks gave out. There were ways through the sandy shoals if a man knew them. When the deeper blue showed good water Mase gave the wheel to Devlin.

Steger said he didn't know a thing about boats, and didn't want to. By noon he had had several drinks, but they made him more moody, and he watched the shoals pass to the sea in a sort of haunted absent-mindedness.

Mase busied himself in the little galley with a look over-shoulder now and then to see where Devlin was holding. The throb of the screw told him of the bottom, but Devlin was following the blue smoothly.

Mase rigged the table, set out the bread and coffee and canned chow and called his guests. He'd take the helm while they ate. Then he noticed an unwieldy burlap-wrapped package by one of the narrow berths forward. Metal shone and he pulled the wrapping aside.

It was a battered copper diving helmet with the lines and hand air-pump. He remembered that Bill Shank used to gather fancy coral between seasons and mount it for curio dealers. But Bill hadn't walked on the bottom for two seasons or more.

MASE went up and took the wheel. The dim mangrove islets were far to the north and the offshore shoals would be tricky along ahead.

"I guess you better handle her," said Devlin. "When you're abreast the Cut let me know. We got some figuring to do."

"Sandy bottom in there but coral ridges on each side. Big weed and sea growth along 'em. At low tide a few outcrops show. You aim to look at them sea gardens? A glass-bottom bucket'll show you all. But you got Shank's divin' gear patched up and laid out. Goin' to use it? I never thought it was game fish you was interested in, Devlin."

"No. But I fixed all this with Shank. Don't know why he quite the job so sudden. He knew what we wanted. The thing is, McKay, that yesterday when we were coming through Strangler's Cut, Steger and me, ribbin' each other with a drink aboard, Steger lost his wallet."

"He'd cleaned up at the Havana Casino; had about thirty grand and a lot of papers he can't afford to lose, and the junk went out of his pocket over the stern when Shank made a sharp turn. It broke Stege all up; that's what's getting him down now."

"How do you mean to find it—the sand driftin' in the tide since yesterday, and no landmarks to fetch?" said Mase incredulously.

"I got marks. That's me, McKay—quick on the old fix. I threw two bottles of Scotch in the channel, on open sand. Not four fathoms down, I reasoned. You can pick them up easy on the white sand, and then somewhere within forty yards of 'em Steger's dough is lying. Shank said anybody could walk bottom along that ledge and pick it up."

"Yeah," said Mase. "A good diver'd make it without any helmet if he knew just where to hit. But if he had to work around—"

"That's it." Devlin grinned. "He likely would. Lucky for us Shank had the outfit."

"I'll look the pump an' airline over," Mase said. "Who's goin' down? What I'm int'rested in is them two bottles o' Scotch. Must been full or they'd drift. You aim to fetch 'em up? A big barraculda playin' round a guy's legs, he can be mean with a skinful o' hootch."

"Barracuda?" said Steger thoughtfully. "I've heard of them."

Devlin broke in quickly. "They're nothing. McKay, you're a live guy, I see. I like your line. Sure, the Scotch is yours—and a case more."

"I been down once off Whitefish Bay. About the same water too."

"Steger's going down," said Devlin, again quickly. "His job. Let the liquor go. McKay gets plenty, along with a bonus if we're right."

"That divin' I did was on a rummy that broke in two. I was shore a hand at salvaging that stuff. Barracudas—hell, I shoved 'em about till they weakened. There was a big shark thought he'd interfere till he saw it was me. He laid off then."

Devlin started to laugh, but Steger muttered: "Shark?"

"They don't bother unless they're hungry, or git a blood scent."

Steger said quickly, "Blood? That brings 'em about?"

Devlin snarled at him. "Say, are you listenin' to him—or me? I can't go down on account of my heart. But any kid can dive in four fathoms."

Steger was staring seaward. A faint line of white marked distant reefs. "How far now to Strangler?" he asked slowly.

"Two hours' run," Mase said. "You guys eat, then me. Then we'll be pickin' up shoal points I know. Got to keep inside and turn 'em fer the pass."

"You'll take the wheel then." Devlin whispered to Mase as Steger went below: "Here, cut that shark stuff out. That guy's losing his nerve."

"You handle the airline and I'll walk bottom for your wallet."

"No," said Devlin. "Steger handles it. It's his anyhow."

He went to dinner and Mase heard them conferring. Devlin snarled; Steger lost his temper once; and then the talk ceased. Obviously they were afraid Mase would hear. There were some angles to this job a guide wasn't to know.

MASE held the wheel in the bright rippling afternoon tide and figured on it. Those birds wanted to get their hands on that stuff first. They didn't want him to handle it at all. Why couldn't they trust him? He couldn't rook 'em. They both had guns and Mase would be dolled up in a copper hat overside. He didn't see it at all.

They finished the meal and came up. Steger's nervous eyes went to the submerged shoals, now showing to port ahead. Devlin took the wheel, but Mase saw his narrow eyes watching the sea line covertly.

Mase thought more while he ate. Who'd they expect coming down Strangler from outside? Patrol planes covered the shore all along, but the coast guard knew all the charter craft and they'd not be covering the *Lulu Jane*. A cutter couldn't get down Strangler anyhow. And why hadn't these two guys let Shank recover this supposed wallet? Maybe it had been dark then.

Devlin brought up the old battered copper helmet and lines. He dumped them in the cockpit and took the wheel. "Look 'em over, boy. Shank inspected 'em once, but I don't want Steger to get more nervous."

"I could fetch that thing up on a straight dive, if I knew where it was exactly."

"Sure. But you don't. Got to poke along carefully by the weeds on that coral shelf. That's the hell of it. I saw it go."

"Then it wasn't after dark," Mase thought. "They saw

it go—whatever it was—and they didn't tell Shank they'd lost anything. Now they didn't want anything known—right then. They let Shank bring 'em to the Inlet, and then they told him they'd lost thirty grand off his boat!

"Don't make sense. No wonder Shank laid off. He didn't believe 'em. Yet they had somethin' over Bill Shank, somehow, or he'd not've trusted his little *Lulu* to me. Shank got good money, but he was scared of something, too. What was it? Two Havana gamblers ain't so hot. I can take 'em to joints in Miami where they'd lose their pants."

Devlin was laying out the lines and inspecting each foot carefully. Steger leaned over Mase's shoulder at the midships helm and stared ahead over the cabin top. "You see Strangler yet?"

"The big coral wall begins a mile on. It runs to Strangler and turns. You hardly see a difference, calm as it is, on this tide."

"Rough along there and you couldn't go over, could you?"

"Couldn't see much maybe. We'll have the right sun slant for it."

"I saw sharks there when we came in," said Steger. "I saw—there's dark holes along there. Caves, Shank said, in the reef wall."

"Yeah. Pot holes. Feller wouldn't want to step in 'em. Might have to club a octopus off his neck. Mostly little ones, jest curious."

"Devilfish," said Steger. "Strangler's a hunting ground for the bad fish, isn't it? Chase mullet through the cut from deep water."

"Yeah. But no sailfish come in. The deep-water babies're outside. So I thought it was funny you guys comin' back to Strangler. Lost wallet?"

"Yes," said Steger, and he saw the first underwater shadows of the gray coral—streamers waving over darker patches. Steger laughed forcedly. "Man wouldn't last long there, would he? I mean those sea wolves'd finish him quick."

"Not if they had live mullet first. Sharks are particular, and suspicious. If one comes near you nail him first with a gad on the nose. Jest blood makes 'em crazy to attack."

"Blood?" muttered Steger. "Why bring that up?"

Devlin came to them. He watched the mouth of the sea pass. He looked at the sun. "How about a highball?" he said. "McKay, we better watch close; slow down and watch that coral line. A mile along here—"

Mase swerved the boat and grinned. "Shark. I put his ears down and, boy, he went." He looked at Steger's tight face. Devlin's was tighter and grim. He swore at both of them.

"What the hell're you doing? Put the heat on Steger? Sharks nothing!"

The water was clear as glass alongside now. The white sandy floor stretched to the plume-nodding coral wall. In spots the wall came nearly to the surface and the sea forest trailed above.

Steger almost forgot his tension for a moment, looking at that. He said, "Quite a sight!"

Mase grunted. "There's a cave. You can tell 'em by bones scattered about. The octopuses drag fish in and eat 'em. A guy can walk around them spots. Even a poor fish knows. They keep away from holes—notice?"

"This stuff won't be in any hole," said Devlin harshly. "I know where it went. I saw it sail down. Saw it hit the sand. Then I started to mark it, with the bottles. I threw three before I told Shank. It was about sunset. He said we couldn't do a thing last night."

"Yeah? Well, we got plenty light if we start now. Watch for marks."

SURE enough, in ten silent minutes Mase saw an object out on the white sand some twenty-five feet below. A stout bottle neck, standing up like a buoy.

Devlin grinned. "I told you, Steger, didn't I? Your dough is along here not a hundred feet inside the cut. Maybe we can spot it."

Mase went forward, dropped the light hook over, let the boat come about on the uptide. They were anchored not twenty feet away from the coral ledge, where only the clean sand shelved, as clear and smooth as a swept street. But Steger didn't look at it. He stared up Strangler Cut, fascinated.

Devlin barked at him, "Come to earth! The job's here!"

"Shark," grunted Mase. "Watch him come to supper."

The silvery mullet were boiling, leaping. They fled past the boat and the gray raider loomed, rushing like a torpedo.

"Nothin' to worry about," Mase said. "Kick 'em under the chin if they come near. Sharks don't jump anything that fights back. Kinda yella rats."

He looked at his guests. They both stared up the sea pass as if that silent brimming tide held hopes or terror for them. Devlin broke the silence by cursing to himself. Steger took a drink.

Mase waited. These boys had never dived deeper than a Broadway gutter on New Year's Eve. But they had to do it. Steger grinned feebly at Mase.

"You've been down, haven't you? For sponge and stuff."

"I've had my ears wet since I was seven. But it ain't divin' we do. Walkin' bottom for fan coral and such. I'm no sponge man, though. We better get busy while we got sun along those potholes."

"Right," said Devlin. "There's the second bottle marker. If I hadn't thought of that we'd never have this lay easy for us. I'd go down if my heart was right. If I passed out I'd never find it and you'd have to haul me up and pump water out of me. Come on, Steger."

Mase got the big helmet. "All you got to do is step off the ladder and drop. On the bottom it's damn pretty. You'll see flowers and fish you can't up here. It's easy; nothing to stop you on this hard bottom sand. I'll tend the air. Devlin can watch ahead."

"What for?" said Steger surlily. But he got over the short ladder from the stern transom, stood there gingerly in shorts and singlet while Mase slowly dropped the helmet over his ears. Mase grinned in the glass front. Steger was sweating, popeyed. Devlin did watch up the pass absorbedly. Then he muttered low to Mase.

"See something. Is that a shark? God's sake, don't let Steger know. See that—it's slow—not a shark, eh?"

"Steger can't hear under that copper hat. That's nothin' up there but brain coral, round like a—well, it ain't no shark. Hey?"

He tapped the glass, took another look at Steger. "All set? Let go the rungs. You'll drop like a feather."

Steger lowered himself. His legs were free. Then the helmet was under and he could look about. Suddenly his arms threshed wildly. He grabbed the ladder and came butting up the stern, bumping the wood.

"Yeah," said Mase, "sure, there's a shark. Little one. What the—"

He let go of the air-pump and grabbed Steger. The man was fighting to get the helmet from his shoulders. Mase hauled him half over the stern and pulled the gear from his head. Steger was pop-eyed and shivering. Devlin was staring at him queerly, silent.

"What's the matter?" asked Mase. "A little three-foot shark ain't nothin'. Now listen, you guys: don't take me serious. Any feller that knows me'll say I ain't to be took serious—not even fightin'. Ferget them sharks and barracuda, an octopuses I ribbed you about."

"You can have 'em!" yelled Steger. "Not for me again!" He turned on Devlin viciously. "You hear? Not for a million!"

"What did you see?" said Devlin curtly, but oddly quiet again.

Mase dropped the helmet and laughed. "Look here. You couldn't git in trouble down there. Why Devlin an' me can watch you every minute. We can see any fool fish that comes near you on the sand. Water's clear as glass." He looked up the cut. "But it won't be an hour from now. Little breeze'll kick the top up and the tide'll fill an' scour sand mebbe. If you guys are goin' down you better start now."

Steger got up and paced the cockpit, fuming and cursing. "Not me! Not ever. I saw—"

"A damn little shark," grunted Devlin. "Mase and me both saw it from the top. You never touched bottom, didn't go near the weeds."

"It was a big one," retorted Steger. "Over the ledge, in the weed stuff, waiting. I saw him—waiting."

Mase eyed the two. The coral ridge arose only a few feet higher than the white sandy channel bottom. The marine growth and holes made it harder to see in detail. But there'd been no shark in that stuff. Steger had just lost his nerve and wanted an excuse for not walking the bottom. But his panic was real.

Devlin sat down and lit a cigarette, studying the silent pass and the sky. "McKay," he muttered. "I guess you got to go down. I don't want you mixed in this thing. Salvaging that stuff was just nobody's business but ours. However you're in and you think it's funny. We haven't any particular terms with you yet, but count five hundred bucks if you find Steger's wallet. And don't talk about the job—not for a good while yet, anyhow. A few months and it won't matter."

Mase grinned. Ever since they got into Strangler's Cut he'd been anxious to walk that bottom just out of curiosity. He'd wanted to scare Steger out of it. Steger took a drink and he sat down, his face twitching.

"Scared," Devlin sneered. "A baby job, and you quit!"

Steger glowered savagely and said nothing.

Mase grinned again. "Okay by me. Five hundred's a lot o' brass to a Glades cracker. An' as fer talkin' about this thing at home—folks wouldn't believe me anyhow. Bluff an' brag—that's Jigger Key's opinion o' me. I can tell 'em anything, an' they'll say it's jest Mase McKay pipin' off. If I showed 'em five hundred bucks they'd say it was phony."

Devlin laughed mirthlessly and looked at the sinking sun.

"It's got to be you," he said. "Show me how to handle the airline and pump. The pressure, I mean, and the signal line."

"Nothin' to it at this depth. I could cast off an' come up without Shank's copper bonnet if I liked to."

DEVLIN nodded at instructions. Then Mase slid over the stern, stood on the swinging ladder and told Devlin how to lower the helmet over his head. Devlin fitted the rubber rim neatly and grinned into the front glass.

Mase dropped away, waving a three-foot length of small pipe—his shark tickler, he called it. He came to the hard bottom easily, stood a minute in a yellowish green world, listening to the slow pulse of the air, feeling the slight throb of his ears adjusting to pressure. Then he looked about slowly.

A beautiful world of silence. The sun glow shot broad bands of paling yellow from the broken clouds of the west and below they turned the coral terrace into fairyland. The ancient rock was grown with newer living coral, delicate fans and tracteries fragile as flowers.

Brilliant little fish, banded red and blue, stole in and out among the anemones and the green plumes waving gently in the tide. Mase went closer, looked up the ridge, and there was Devlin's bottle of Scotch. But a guy couldn't get a drink with Shank's copper hat down over his ears and chin.

"But I'm takin' it up when I go," Mase muttered. "Devlin was smart to toss them bottles. If the wallet went down one o' the potholes it ain't so nice. Hey, you—move on!"

The first darker space—a cavern in the rock, half below the sand floor—was half-hidden by the plummy growth above it, but he saw the octopus moving back from the rim. Mase dragged nearer and shoved his pipe at the two-foot body behind the squirming tentacles. It vanished in the cave with a cloud of inky stuff drifting up.

"Lay off that," said Mase. "Don't bother me an' I let you alone."

He began searching along the foot of the coral under the overhanging sea growth. Out on the sand he'd have spotted the wallet as easily as a man could the Scotch markers. He could see the red bottom of the *Lulu Jane* above with his lines trailing to her stern, and even the blur which would be Devlin working the pump.

Mase didn't want to go up. This was something to tell about at Jigger Key. Pretty easy money, if he found that dough of Steger's.

Then he stopped. Hell, there it was, easy as that! On the sand at the foot of the coral, hardly hidden by the sea plumes. Mase went near, rubbed his ribs and eyed the find. A fair-sized wallet, and you could almost read the gold lettering on its leather back. Bending over, he made out the initials *D.A.J.*

Mase grunted. They weren't Steger's initials, or Devlin's. Mase leaned on his iron gad and looked at the wallet critically. He thought that maybe, before he retrieved that package of dough, he'd better recover Devlin's Scotch. In case of shock a guy might need it; in fact, just reading the label through the thick glass of his helmet would help. It would strengthen him to go up and break the news that this couldn't be Steger's wallet.

So he got them both—the bottle first.

"Jones," Mase grunted. "They had a line about Jones who got seasick and quit 'em. D. Jones—Davy's brother. Now. That's the reason Devlin didn't want me to go below and see the thing. They didn't tell me all the truth, and I'm a guy who feels pained when he ain't told truth. Hey, you!"

He rolled toward the rock ledge and waved his gad at a five-foot tiger shark which came nosing along the sea flowers. The brute slid away suspiciously, and Mase picked up the wallet. Hardly a drift of sand on it, clean as new, perhaps slightly water-swollen.

"If this ain't easy five hundred bucks to earn, then I never gamble agin. All I do is do nothin'. Hand this to Devlin and act as if I never saw nothin' funny. Yeah, but—"

He looked at the edge of the billfold and there was a thin cloud—yellowish red—floating from it. You wouldn't say it was a blood trace, but a guy down twenty-five feet under the sea, with two guns above him, isn't going to ask fool questions. Mase stuck the wallet between his knife belt and his ribs, looked at his bottle of Scotch, and sighed. Go up and laugh it off, that'll all he could do.

He heard the air hissing softly from the line and his ears were a little tight. Then he took a last look up Strangler's Cut.

Nightfall was deepening the bluer distance, and the plumey reef wall cast shadows out on the white sand. And down these bars of shade and sunlight past the sea forest a man was walking

MASE didn't believe it. He even rubbed the bottle of Scotch across the copper plate under his nose absently. Yeah, a man was walking bottom. It sure was funny. He didn't walk so well; you'd think he was soused, the way he wobbled and reeled in the slow tide. Sea growth clung to him, but he came head up, touched the rock where a point stuck out, hesitated, and then turned about and came gently on.

"Jones," Mase grunted. "Damn if it ain't! Hey, you, keep on yore way. I don't aim to tangle with no drowned folks. I got yore money, Jones, and they's been blood on it. You made yore last bet, so keep goin'."

The dead man's feet hardly touched the sand. He'd have gone to the top belly up, but the drifting sea growth checked him. He came around the rock point, dancing slowly in the tide, and stopped. His distorted head showed as the swollen body turned, and he peered at Mase McKay over the green plumes. His mouth was open, grinning horribly, and his eyes bulged and filmed. Mase would have liked to rub the back of his head to keep his hair from rising.

That corpse was ready to rise and if Mase stirred the weeds about him he would. Rise, Mase thought, to face Devlin and Steger.

"Man," Mase muttered. "You'll git me in a bad spot. I don't put nothin' past them guys above. They might send me down to stroll with you if they knew I'd met you. You stay here."

The dead man rocked gently in the tide. Mase waved his bottle of Scotch. He was afraid to move, to signal for Devlin to draw him up. The suction would pull the murdered man right up past Mase's ears.

"Yeah, an' you'd beat me up too, the way you look, an' grin at 'em. Now, listen, brother, this here's a big ocean, but it ain't big enough for two of us. One of us is goin' to git out—an' it's me."

The dead man swung slowly and Mase saw his swollen neck. It was a pale-ridged gash from ear to spine. Knifed, Mase thought. They'd put it to him and tossed him from the stern o' the *Lulu Jane* yesterday. Bill Shank had been at his wheel or motor and hadn't seen it. But Bill had known he started out with three passengers, and only two had stepped ashore at the Inlet. They must have told Bill some lie, but he'd been scared.

Mase McKay was scared, too, but didn't know what to do about it. Not scared of D. Jones but of Jones' pals sitting snug above on the *Lulu Jane*. If they should happen to look below carefully they might notice things. They might cut Mase's airline and start that motor.

"It ain't no place to fire a guy off his job down at the bottom of this here ocean," Mase thought. "I got to go above an' hand Devlin some kiddin' line to show I never saw nothin'. That's why him an' Steger kept lookin' up the Cut today—this here killin' on their minds. Hey, Jones, you drift on past. I don't wanna be found with you!"

Old D. Jones bobbed about. Maybe he wanted his dough. Maybe he was trying to show Mase that slash in his throat. Tiny angel fish, spots of red and blue and yellow, swam about his face. A little grouper nibbled his nose. They hadn't started to work on Jones yet. The crabs would be first, when Jones got through his wandering and settled for the sea sleep that better men had taken.

Mase looked up. Must be near sundown. Distance was bluer. The shadows were across Strangler Cut's white sands. He could see the hulk of the *Lulu Jane* and all about her was a silky blur of water. Well, that was good. A breeze was rippling the surface. A man above couldn't see the bottom clearly now.

Mase studied his silent partner again. He'd lost track

of time. Devlin might get impatient and haul on that line. That would be okay if Jones didn't hoof along after Mase. Mase had a notion to stuff the wallet into D. Jones' dank clothes and swing up to the world of living men. Just tell Devlin he hadn't found any lost dough.

But then they'd want to hang around. Try it tomorrow with better light. No, it would be better not to pull anything on two guys with guns, since Mase hadn't even a pair of pants on.

The tide and drifting weed kept D. Jones edging slowly toward Mase, and Mase stepped back. He discovered he was trying to tiptoe to avoid attracting Jones' attention, and that was foolish.

Jones couldn't hear or see; he just wanted to dance gently on past Mase, down Strangler's Cut. Mase stood still as stone and let him pass. Jones was almost astern the shadow of the *Lulu Jane* when Devlin jerked the line. Devlin was trying to see overside, but the ripples made that sea twilight vague and shifty.

Mase pulled back twice. He'd go up. Go up and laugh this off. Tell 'em he'd got Steger's wallet easy, but he'd just lingered to look at the pretty sea flowers. Yeah, tell 'em anything until he got on shore. Then tell 'em some more—maybe at the Inlet bar where they couldn't drag guns to shut his mouth about Davy Jones' brother.

That is, if he ever got to the Inlet bar—and was in any shape to talk when he got there. He wasn't quite sure. . . .

MASE tightened the wallet in his belt, swung on the line and came up like a cat swinging on a grapevine. Four fathoms up, and the tide was full and still. Mase grunted as he grasped the stern ladder. The tide was as dead as D. Jones—and he hadn't thought of that.

But he climbed clear, leaned his lean brown body over the transom and tugged at the helmet. Devlin grabbed it. Together they wrenched it off and Mase sat up. Steger was on the cabin top, looking dull and sick. This long silence below had got him bad.

"Yeah?" said Devlin, "Man, you got it!"

"Sure," said Mase. "Nothin' to the job. I was lookin' around."

He pulled the wallet from his knife belt and held it out to Devlin, the gold-initial side down. Devlin's eyes were narrowing as he grinned. He grabbed it and turned forward.

"Okay, boy—you did a job. Steger couldn't take it."

Devlin halted, staring at his pal. Steger was on his feet, yelling. He pointed past Devlin astern. Mase turned, and he knew why he turned. D. Jones had heaved up, following the suck of the line, for the tide had gone as dead as he was and the weeds wouldn't stay down.

On his back was Mr. Jones, and grinning in the sunset. Steger was dancing up and down, shrieking. Devlin was fixed as a statue for a minute, watching him. Then he turned slowly to look aft, and that was when Mase took him. On a rush, naked and dripping. Reaching one hand to Devlin's gun holster under his elbow, and butting Devlin's back with his wet head.

Devlin went up and over the cockpit. He hit the water with a slight grunt, so startled that he lost his voice. He splashed heavily and looked up. This Florida swamper had surely lost his mind.

Mase had the gun and he picked up the wallet. Steger had ceased his panic and was staring at Mase McKay. Then he pointed and yelled again.

Mase swung to him with the gun. "Come aft. Pass me an' git that boathook outa the chock. Swing over the ladder and lay hold o' Jones. He's comin' back with the turn o' tide. Git him, you an' Devlin. Hang to that ladder,

Devlin, or you don't hang to nothin'! Heave on Mr. Jones, the two o' you rats!"

Devlin stroked clumsily to the ladder, and he flinched. The dead man was not two yards from his shoulders. Steger seemed to have collapsed like a big, bent old man as he shuffled past Mase with hardly a look at him. He got a leg to the ladder and shoved the boathook out over Devlin's head. The steel caught Jones' dragging collar and he slowed. Devlin turned and snarled at the dead face not a yard from his own.

"Get away with that, Steger! Let me up the ladder."

Mase stood in the cockpit, gun at Steger's back. "No, you don't, not either of you. You hang to that ladder or nothin'. Make way fer Mr. Jones. Jones comes first, damn if he don't, long as I'm in charge o' this party. Hey, Jones, come aboard!"

Steger groaned. "Devlin did this. Knifed Danny—"

"You yellow rat!" Devlin raged at Steger's face above him. "You did it. You and Danny couldn't split that take at the Havana Casino, and you put heat on him out at Oriental Park, and he wouldn't let you in on it. So you cabled me to meet you two at Key West. You didn't have the guts to handle him, so you put it to me."

"You put him away yesterday on this boat," said Steger, getting stolid and ugly now. "Shank didn't see it. You told Shank, when we landed at the Inlet, that Jones had slipped ashore when Shank was tying up. Shank was suspicious; he knew there'd been trouble. Maybe he saw blood somewhere when Jones' wallet fell overboard as you jumped him. I wouldn't knife a guy for money. You would and did."

"Listen," said Mase McKay. "This ain't no court nor inquest. You two guys crawl aside on that ladder. Gimme the end o' that pole, Steger. Make way fer Mr. Jones!"

He took the boathook and dragged. Jones came up, dripping and swinging, and it looked to Mase as if his right foot took a twisting kick at Devlin's face. Devlin shrank to one side anyhow. Steger crouched by the ladder and Jones brushed his arm.

Mase backed away and straightened Jones out in the cockpit. He tossed Jones' racetrack money down in the galley sink, and then turned to his passengers.

"You two guys sit with your legs over the transom and face aft. You'll enjoy the ride better lookin' aft then for-ard. I'm pullin' the hook and openin' the gas. The *Lulu Jane* can travel when a guy like me says to."

"You sit there quiet—unless you'd rather heave off. The sharks are feedin' inside now on the tide. But damn if I care what you do. I can watch you all the way to the Inlet, an' crack the top off this bottle o' Scotch while I steer. I trust I like it."

He went swiftly forward, got up the light hook and traveled back, watching them every second.

Devlin turned his face astern and watched the white water boil from the screw. Then he grunted to Steger. "Try to talk to this fellow. Five grand might make him listen. He could shove Jones off again. We'd all have a drink at the Inlet—"

Mase heard. He put the gun by the wheel and stood half-turned, looking over Jones in the cockpit to his guests beyond.

"I ain't waitin'," Mase grinned. "I'm havin' mine now—straight. I'm havin' two drinks—mebbe four, before I turn you guys over to the deputies at the Inlet. Hey, Mister Jones! Wish you could join me in one. You can't, that's the hell of it!"

And the rest of the way back to the Inlet, Mase had time to think of how he might get some of what was in that wallet.

The Scotch was very good.

Murder Goes to Sea



Ayres faced Barbara West with the gun.
"I—I never saw the thing before," she
wailed. "Please leave me alone!"

Allan R. Bosworth

THERE'S a killer on board the *U. S. S. Consolation*—hospital ship of the Pacific Fleet—and Naval Surgeon VINCENT AYRES has been assigned the job of finding out who it is. Meanwhile the *Consolation* is standing by *U. S. S. Algonquin*, which has been rescuing the survivors from a sunken submarine.

LIEUTENANT MCQUAID, engineering officer of the Navy's new submarine *Starfish*, has been murdered—his head crushed by a blunt instrument—in the Sick Officers' Quarters of the Naval hospital on the California coast.

The crime followed the mysterious sinking of the *Starfish* on a trial run, with the loss of twenty-two men in the flooded after compartment. Besides McQuaid, those rescued on the first trip of the *Algonquin's* diving bell were:

LIEUTENANT EVERETT BRILL II, the submarine's commander, whom McQuaid had accused of being drunk after an altercation on the boat, and who is now being held under arrest;

MIKE WAY, chief torpedoman and master diver, who is stricken with the bends after returning to help with the rescue, and who wants to dive again to find a bottle that he took from Brill's pocket and hid before their rescue;

CARDONI, machinist's mate, who had threatened McQuaid, but who is removed from the list of suspects by his own murder on board the *Consolation*;

KOWALSKI, another sailor; and JOHN THORPE, jittery

youngster of the crew, who is very new to Navy life.

Two civilian observers for Westco Iron Works, builder of the *Starfish*: VICTOR MELHORNE, chief engineer, and FOSTER BEDELL, naval architect.

All of these men were in S. O. Q. when McQuaid was murdered. But there were others there that night, all of them close to the crime:

GRUFF old ADMIRAL J. K. WETHERBEE, retired, laid up with a broken leg, whose carefully kept journal is throwing interesting light on what happened;

EVELYN BRILL, the submarine commander's daughter, who is following the family career as a Navy nurse;

MARTIN WEST, submarine builder, who is worried about his Government contract for more boats, which may now go to his competitor, Pacific Maritime;

BARBARA, his cafe-society daughter, secretly engaged to Melhorne, who has admitted visiting his room—near McQuaid's—on the night of the murder; and who (as Ayres learns later) had been jilted several years before by her fiance—McQuaid.

The blood-stained butt of a billiard cue, taken from Thorpe after the murder, seems to point to him as murderer; but MCCARTHY, night watchman at the Naval hospital, eventually admits that he had hit Thorpe over the head with it after taking it from him on the night of McQuaid's death.

Meanwhile, Thorpe goes on a sleep-walking tour which

This story began in the Argosy for March 15

takes him into the old admiral's cabin; and just before coming to, he attempts to seize the admiral's logbook. And then, after the murder of his roommate, Cardoni, Thorpe disappears.

AT last it seems to Dr. Ayres that there is going to be a break in the case. Back from his diving work on the sunken *Starfish*, Mike Way has news of an important discovery he made while down under. Ayres goes to his cabin; and the diver is just about to tell his story when three shots are fired through the porthole.

The assassin disappears; and Way, though unhit, is taken back to the *Algonquin*, suffering horribly from the bends. . . .

CHAPTER XX

A LOG CAN LIE

MIKE WAY came back to dim consciousness in the *Algonquin's* recompression tank, shouting and fighting against the doctor and the pharmacist's mate who were massaging his arms and legs. But the struggle was brief, and the big man pulled himself to a sitting position.

"What time is it?" he demanded. "How long have I been in here?"

The doctor smiled. "Less than an hour, Chief. But you're going to be here a lot longer. You're going to spend the night in here, just to make sure."

Mike lay back down. "That's all right, sir—to stay all night. But in the morning, I got to dive."

He glanced at the pressure gauge. Forty-five pounds:—approximately a hundred feet. And the doctor and pharmacist's mate grinned at each other. "What are you trying to do, Chief?" the corpsman asked humorously. "Make a rate?"

"I got to dive!" Mike said stubbornly.

"We'll talk about that later," the doctor promised. "I'd hate to see you cripple yourself for life."

"I can take it," Mike declared. "Just once more, doctor. After I come up that time, I'll spend a week in this tank if necessary. But a lot depends on that dive, now."

"I sent you back to the *Consolation* too soon, as it was," said the doctor. "The bends are tricky. It's hard to tell when the danger is past."

Mike Way frowned. He was just remembering that somebody—the murderer—had taken three shots at him as he lay in his bunk on the *Consolation*. He remembered that a sudden spasm of the bends had doubled him up an instant before that gun began popping in the porthole. It was funny, but the bends probably had saved his life. . . .

"Danger?" he growled. "Hell, it's a damn sight safer on the bottom than it is up here!"

"I heard about it," the doctor said dryly. "But you can talk about that later, too. Just relax, now. And keep this oxygen mask on for awhile."

After a time, the doctor went out through the air lock, leaving the pharmacist's mate to watch over the big patient and to continue rubbing his arms and legs. The nitrogen was gradually working off; oxygen speeded the action of his blood in getting rid of the gas. The pressure inside the chamber was reduced at carefully timed intervals.

MIKE could think, now. He reviewed the whole mysterious train of events, from the time the *Starfish* started her full crash diving test to the present. McQuaid, clubbed to death as he lay unconscious after the operation

on his fractured skull . . . young John Thorpe prowling about the hospital grounds in the rainy dark, carrying a billiard cue . . .

"Doc," Mike asked the pharmacist's mate, "did you ever have any experience with a sleepwalker?"

There was still enough pressure in the chamber to distort a man's voice. The corpsman looked up quickly.

"With a what?"

"A sleepwalker! A guy who walks around with his eyes open, but who is really caulking off."

The pharmacist's mate chuckled, then sobered. "Knew one once, at the San Diego hospital. He got a medical survey out of the Navy. They figured they couldn't take chances on a man who might get out of his hammock some night and stroll over the side."

"That's what this kid is supposed to have done," Mike Way said. "It's not a gag, then?"

"Oh, absolutely not. I mean, not if the guy who does it ain't putting on a gag. I guess it would be kind of hard to tell whether a man was faking, or not. Anyway, this bird got out of the Navy that way."

"But I've seen a few others try to work tricks to get paid off, and it made me kind of suspicious. One guy faked a pretty good TB cough, and when he was ordered up for an X-ray of his chest, he soaked some cigarettes in iodine and smoked them—figuring the smoke would color his lungs enough that they'd photograph dark, like they were inflamed."

"Did they give him a survey?"

"I don't know," the corpsman said. "I was shanghaied to the battlewagons about that time. Oh, if a man really wants out of the Service, they might as well kick him out;—he's no good in the Navy."

Mike Way lay digesting this. He couldn't imagine anybody's wanting out of the Navy. But then some men couldn't stand the gaff. That first six months or a year—training station drills, messcook duty and all the really tough part. He could remember his own days as an apprentice and second-class seaman, and the thought came to him suddenly that young John Thorpe was not yet through that trying period.

But he pulled his mind back to the present, and the problem before him. Regardless of who was guilty of the murders, there was that thing he had seen projecting from one of the vents in the conning tower of the *Starfish*. It looked, Mike Way recalled, something like the blade of a thin, curved knife.

He said, "I don't see how another dive would hurt me. Before they had recompression tanks, didn't they send a guy back down to the bottom and bring him up more slowly? The pressure down there's the same as here."

"Except," replied the pharmacist's mate, "you get oxygen here, and CO₂ down there. And up here you're warm and dry, and you're not going to slip and fall twenty feet off a deck and get squeezed completely into your helmet. No, I'd say there's a slight difference."

BACK in Admiral Wetherbee's room, Evelyn Brill and Vince Ayres were looking at a chart the gaunt old man had drawn with no small amount of draftsman's skill.

"Submarines have changed considerably since I did duty in them," he said in his booming voice. "But I've been over this with Lieutenant James since he came out of the *Starfish*, and it's fairly accurate. You see this, doctor?"

He pointed with his pencil to lines on the chart. Vince

noded. "But human anatomy and the complications of a submarine are two different things," the doctor said. "I don't understand it."

"The *Starfish*," explained the admiral, "had two separate main induction systems to supply air when she was on the surface. They were separate, mind you. Both opened up here. The bigger induction ran aft; that's where the Diesels were, and, naturally, they had to have more air back there."

"I can see that," Evelyn said.

"All right. When preparations are made for a dive, the power is shifted to the electric motors. The inductions are closed. You can't see the valves up there, but there is an indicator board that lights up red and green. It's in the control room, and they call it the Christmas tree."

"Lieutenant James, your father, and several other men have told me that the Christmas tree's lights were all green. So"—and the admiral sighed—"the vents were closed. I had thought perhaps the water came in there."

Vince Ayres rose and impatiently paced the room. "Then that leads us nowhere," he said, stopping to face the admiral. "Mike Way found something, but it could hardly be those valves you've sketched; they certainly couldn't be seen from the outside of the ship."

"He may have discovered a break in the hull," the admiral said. "Or a hatch open aft—one of many things."

"Well, we'll find out when he's sufficiently recovered to return to the *Consolation*," Vince went on. "But in the meantime, we've got to act—before somebody else is murdered!"

Admiral Wetherbee shook his head with a mysterious half smile, and pressed the buzzer. He said: "There will be no more murders, doctor. Not so long as Mike Way is out of reach. And when he comes back to the ship—Oh, corpsman, do you think you could forage the icebox and find me a turkey leg? Thank you . . . And when he comes back to the ship, we must see that he's safely locked up."

A sudden thought struck Evelyn. She leaned forward to look the shaggy-browed man squarely in his eyes.

"Did you have anything to do with Dad's arrest, Admiral Wetherbee?"

"Well, yes." The admiral nodded. "I sent a recommendation to the commandant just before we sailed, urging that Lieutenant Brill be placed in custody—protective custody. The commandant approved and radio orders to that effect followed."

ANGRY color flooded the girl's cheeks, but her voice was cold. "You surely must have known what this means to his record at a time when he's being considered for selection as lieutenant commander! It might have even—"

"Easy there, girl," the admiral said gruffly. "There'll be no entry on his service record. Don't blow up a gale until you know the reasons for things; then you won't have to. Now when we came aboard the *Consolation* I reasoned that Thorpe was not the murderer. I deduced that Everett Brill was either guilty of murder, or he was in danger of being killed, himself. . . .

"No—hear me out, now! McQuaid was killed to cover up something. It could have been neglect of duty on your father's part—the intoxication charge, which I didn't want to believe—or it could have been to cover up any chance of a structural fault's being discovered before Westco Iron Works cinched that fat contract."

"So you took it out on Dad," Evelyn said bitterly. She was dangerously near to tears.

The admiral shook his head.

"No. I had him locked up to eliminate him from the scene, both for his own protection and to study what happened. You know how well my theory was proved—much more strongly than I'd expected—by Cardoni's murder."

"And that helped Dad a lot!" the girl cried. "He was seen in the passageway just before Cardoni's body was found!"

"Coincidence," the admiral retorted. "I had lieutenant Brill locked up because it was the best thing to do. I wish now that we had locked up Cardoni."

The corpsman came back with a turkey leg and a glass of milk, and grinned as he put the platter on the bedside locker. The admiral began eating.

Vince Ayres sat down again. He said, "Well—what about Thorpe, then? Is he missing, or not?"

Admiral Wetherbee's sea-blue eyes twinkled and then turned crafty. "You've certainly got me under your guns tonight, haven't you?" he chuckled. "Well . . . I don't know where Thorpe is. I haven't seen him since I had him up here for questioning. Did they search the ship thoroughly?"

"Yes, sir," Vince answered.

"They found his white hat and some of his clothes, I'm told," the admiral went on. "That looks bad. The lad most certainly should have been locked up, doctor."

"I've been criticized on that point!" Vince snapped. "You questioned him, then. What did you learn?"

The admiral's brows crawled together. "I found out more by having information relayed to me from ashore—data concerning his life as a civilian. You were right when you speculated that he'd been somewhat of a mamma's boy. Only son of a widowed mother. Three older sisters. Spoiled and petted; you might say he had an apron-string complex, and the Navy was too much for him."

"He might have changed," Evelyn said. "The transition to submarine life was too sudden. And the shock he suffered! I've never been able to convince myself that he had anything to do with the murders."

"I think his connection with the case was quite similar to your father's," the admiral said. "So far as our investigation, I mean. He could have been considered guilty. On the other hand, he, himself, was the most logical contender for the doubtful honor of becoming the next victim, because with his death all three of the men who escaped from the after portion of the *Starfish* would have been silenced."

"He must have known this, and it preyed upon his mind. So—he disappeared, and we have reasonable proof that he *wasn't* guilty, now. That proof is the fact that the murderer subsequently tried to kill Mike Way."

VINCE shook his head. "In other words, you eliminated Brill, and you're of the opinion that Thorpe eliminated himself. And then the murderer still strikes—at the man who thinks he's found why the *Starfish* sank. You're intimating, then, that one of four persons committed the murders."

"What four?" the admiral demanded.

"Martin West, Victor Melhorne, Foster Bedell or Barbara West. Oh, I've had my suspicions, too, but we haven't an iota of real evidence against any of them. We're right where we started."

"I'm not intimating any of them is guilty," the admiral said testily. "They built that ship; it seems to me that sabotage by any of them—and that's what you'd have to consider—would be most unlikely. There *are* others, you know. Did you question Kowalski?"

"Why, yes, briefly. He wasn't aft in the submarine, and he certainly had no reason to kill McQuaid or Cardoni."

The admiral reached for his logbook. From the number of pages he turned before finding what he sought, Vince realized that the old man had made public only a fraction of his entries.

"I had Kowalski's past investigated, too," he said. "Listen. 'Kowalski, Ivan Peter, Fireman 1c, USN. From Chicago. Father was a radical. Kowalski himself once active in young communist group. Arrested once on charge of arson, but acquitted. Apparently reformed in political beliefs and joined Navy. Navy record good.'"

Vince said, "You don't mean to tell me you think *anybody* would attempt to destroy a submarine when he was down in it!"

"I never knew a man so foolish." The admiral sighed.

"All right, sir," Vince replied, and came to the point. "That logbook has been of great help, so far, Admiral. But today, in it, you said you knew the identity of the murderer. That's what I came here to find out. If you do know, this is no time to be keeping the knowledge secret."

The admiral's hearty chuckle rumbled through the room. "Doctor," he said with an airy wave of the diminished drumstick, "I wouldn't want you to pass this along. Nor you, Evelyn. Both of you know how scuttlebutt rumor spreads through a ship."

They were expectantly silent. Admiral Wetherbee permitted himself another chuckle.

"The fact is," he said, "that logbooks sometimes give out the damndest false impressions to be found anywhere."

"Then you really don't know!"

The admiral looked at the porthole as if his keen old eyes could see the rise and fall of the swells that were one with the darkness. He said evasively: "Did you ever hear the old story about the merchant skipper and the mate who was inclined to tipple now and then? The skipper logged this entry: *The mate was drunk today*. That made the mate pretty sore, being put on record. Next day, when he had occasion to write the log, he put down: *The captain was sober today*."

He smiled at them innocently. "That shows you. I'd like to create the illusion that this logbook sees, knows and tells all; and I'd like for you to help me create that illusion. But, as for yourselves, remember that any logbook can give out a false impression."

CHAPTER XXI

THE GHOST GOES DOWN

VINCE AYRES hardly knew whether to be angry or amused when he and Evelyn left the admiral's room. Humor of the situation struck him, but he felt a certain annoyance, too. The commandant had placed him in charge of the investigation, but this old man lay back in his quiet room with his starboard leg in a cast, and pulled the strings as if all the actors in the grim mystery play were puppets.

They stopped in a ward diet kitchen, where Mae Kennedy, the prematurely motherly-looking nurse, made them

coffee and sandwiches and remarked that they must be dead on their feet.

Evelyn shook her head, and Vince saw a glint in her gray eyes. She told him, when Mae was out of hearing, "I'm not tired any more. I'm angry—and disappointed. The admiral has always been one of my favorite people. But what right did he have to cause Dad's arrest—to cause him all the mental torture he's suffered for two days?"

"I don't know," Vince said slowly. He removed his glasses, and she noticed how much younger his sensitive face looked without them. He said, "Maybe he was right, though, Evelyn. Better a little mental discomfort than a shot in the back—or a marlin hitch around your neck."

"Oh, I don't question his motives. He thought he was doing the right thing. But you're in charge, Vince, and—well, I trust your judgment. If *you'd* had Dad locked up—"

She stopped, confused. Vince Ayres reached for her hand, and their eyes met, shining. But the plump nurse came back into the diet kitchen to sterilize a hypodermic needle by boiling it, and the shadow of unsolved and unknown things rose between them.

"You're in charge," Evelyn repeated. "After all, he's retired, and his rank doesn't count so much any more. We'd all appreciate his help, of course, but he's practically taken things over—and bungled them. He's claimed publicly that the crime is solved. And he can't make good on that claim."

"I wondered," Vince said softly. "The old boy is very shrewd . . . I can understand how he feels, too, Evelyn. By the time a man reaches flag rank, he's pretty well accustomed to running his own show. So the admiral has been virtually running this one behind the scenes. But maybe he saved your father from getting killed; we'll probably never know. Let's give him a little more time to make good before we pass judgment. After all, I've accomplished nothing; and I've got only twenty-four more hours to figure this thing out."

"But suppose you haven't turned up the murderer by tomorrow night. What can Captain McKee do about it? He doesn't know the background of the case. He'd be starting in cold."

"He wouldn't start on it at all," Vince said grimly. "He'd simply lock all of us up—you and me, too—and keep us locked up until we've docked again, and authorities ashore can take over. That way, the murder trail would be getting colder all the time, and none of us could help."

WHEN Vince had gone to his room, Lieutenant James came looking for him. The small, dapper officer didn't look like a man who'd gone through an ordeal of waiting on the bottom of the sea, but his eyes were worried. After some hesitation, he drew a bottle from his pocket.

"Chief Way sent word down by the rescue bell that you wanted to see this, doctor," he said. "But if somebody's trying to tell you the skipper was drunk, that somebody's a liar!"

Vince smiled at this straightforward expression of loyalty. "I don't think it will come to that now," he assured James. "But this bottle may be exhibit A for the defense if Everett Brill should be accused."

He drew the cork to smell and taste the few drops of liquid remaining in the small flask.

"Elixir of terpin hydrate, all right," he said. "Cough medicine. I think maybe somebody jogged the pharmacist's

mate's elbow when he poured in the alcohol. But a man would have to drink a considerable quantity to get tight on it."

"I'm glad I brought the bottle up, then," James said. "I was worried when the chief said you wanted it. You see, doctor, Captain Brill is—well, a white man! He's Four-O. And all of us are back of him. All of us," he added significantly, "who are left."

"I can't say what will happen if the board of inquiry has to investigate a submarine disaster and several murders, too," Vince said. "But I'm hoping he won't be blamed for anything. I'd like to ask you a few questions, Lieutenant . . ."

The executive officer could tell him nothing new. Yes, he had noticed McQuaid's bitterness toward the captain. Like Mike Way, he thought it was one of those things Everett Brill could handle, and it would have adjusted itself within a short time. A shakedown cruise, James said, not only proved a ship's engines, but it got the personnel working smoothly, too. He agreed that Cardoni was wrought up to the point of murder after McQuaid shut that watertight door. . .

"But the chances were that Cardoni's brother never could have reached the door, anyway," he said, and the memory of the horror twisted his lips. "Those men back there died quickly and mercifully."

"What about Thorpe?" Vince asked.

"He was one of those problem children who get in the Navy now and then. He should have been given an inaptitude discharge at the training station. Maybe that sounds harsh. I've seen some of those boys snap out of it and make sailormen, all right. But I'm not sure that Thorpe ever would have done that. I expected to see him go over the hill—run away—the first time he had liberty and a few dollars."

"Do you think he'd be capable of committing a couple of murders—and trying a third?"

James stared. "I don't get that about the third attempt," he said. "Not if you mean the shots fired at Mike Way. Thorpe disappeared before that happened, according to what I was told—walked over the side!"

"I'm only speculating," Vince said. "What do you think?"

"Hell! I think it takes a certain amount of nerve to commit a murder!"

VINCE undressed as soon as the submarine's executive officer had gone. Then he answered a knock at his door, and received a radio message from the Intelligence officer on shore—

RADIO NINETEENTH NAVAL THIRTEENTH 0120 BT
LIEUT. VINCENT AYRES USS CONSOLATION BT

MCQUAID MURDER WEAPON FOUND LATE YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON BY MAN CLIPPING HEDGE BELOW BALCONY.
IT WAS BRICK WHICH HAD BEEN USED AS SHOCK BLOCK
TO ELEVATE FOOT OF BED WHEN PATIENTS BECAME
FAINT. MATE TO IT FOUND IN CLOSET OF VACANT NUM-
BER THREE QUIET ROOM INDICTING MURDERER WENT
THROUGH THAT ROOM TO GAIN ACCESS TO BALCONY.
MICROSCOPIC AND CHEMICAL EXAMINATION OF BRICK
SHOWS BLOODSTAINS ALSO LINT FROM NURSES CAPE
IN WHICH IT WAS WRAPPED. BT

SIMMONS
TOD 0128

Vince went to bed with his head whirling from weariness and a sense of confusion. Nothing tied in here to make a complete pattern; the case was full of seemingly irrelevant things, such as the admiral's deduction that the murder blows had been timed to the chopping of ice in the diet kitchen.

Everything was at loose ends. Admiral Wetherbee, he reflected, would have called these dangling, unsecured pieces of evidence "Irish pennants." The investigation appeared to be becalmed, fouled in a Sargasso sea of complications and possibilities.

John Thorpe was as James had described him: he had lacked the nerve required to commit murder. Initiative, Vince thought, was a better word. But Thorpe normally awake and Thorpe under the psychosis of somnambulism were two different persons; the subconscious desire to kill might have manifested itself in his sleep.

But the admiral apparently believed Thorpe was dead before that gun was thrust through a porthole to fire at Mike Way. The *Consolation* was a big ship and an almost empty one; Vince was not overlooking the possibility of a man's being able to hide in it.

He doubted, however, that any somnambulist could aim a gun within inches of a man's head. And when things went back to a rainy night on the hospital balcony, and to a man seen there with a club, they came to a new tangle. The club was irrelevant, too; it had not been the murder weapon.

Irish pennants, and nothing else. . . .

THE ship slept. At 0345 the bosun's mate on duty roused out the four-to-eight anchor watch, and a sea man climbed to the bridge with a pot of "jamoke"—the Navy's word for coffee. The *Consolation* was swinging a little with the tide as she rode the dark, lifting swells.

There was still a ring around the moon, and from high above the riding lights of the ships standing by over the grave of the *Starfish* must have looked like another ring on the sea: the *Algonquin*, yonder; the *Westsal*—West's salvage boat—scarcely a line's throw to her starboard; the *Consolation*, and a destroyer anchored a little farther away.

Lights gleamed from the portholes of one room well aft on the main deck of the *Consolation*. The admiral was writing in his log, chuckling to himself in the full satisfaction of employing Navy terms to record trivial incidents:

USS CONSOLATION, 13 January.

At Sea. Anchored as before.

0400 Making all preparations for going into Condition of Readiness No. 2, this date.

0410 to 0530 Asleep.

0535 Admiral J. K. WETHERBEE, USN, (Retired) left his bed, boarded wheelchair with two hospital corpsmen as sideboys, breaking his flag as Commander Mechanized Forces Afloat. (COMECHFOR.)

0536 Shifted to hand steering, experiencing some difficulty occasioned by roll of the ship.

WORK AND DRILL SCHEDULE

USS Wheelchair, 13 January.

0540 All hands.

0600 Turn to. Clean shave port and starboard. Dry down by 0610.

0700 Breakfast.

0800 Muster on stations and submit reports of absentees to murder investigating board prior to 0850.

1200 Dinner.

1300 Turn to. Continue navigating wheelchair operating

independently. Continue private investigation of murder. 1730 Supper.

2030 Go into Condition of Readiness No. 2. All hands battle stations. Darken ship.

2040 (or when Contact is made) Trap murderer and solve tactical problem of murder mystery. Solve mystery of loss of USS STARFISH.

2100 (or as soon as is practicable thereafter) Hoist signal Cease Present Exercises. Convene Critique in isolation ward.

J. K. WETHERBEE

Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (Retd.)

COMECHFOR.

If Victor Melhorne could have seen the admiral as he wrote, the pale-eyed shipbuilding official would have been certain that the old man was, indeed, in his second childhood. But Melhorne was asleep, and he had no inkling of the schedule Admiral Wetherbee had drawn for himself.

Dawn came over the sea, sullen and gray. It was Friday, the thirteenth.

FOR the rest of those aboard, the day began much as yesterday had started. For Vince Ayres, the outlook was even blacker. But there was a break in the ship's routine.

It came immediately after quarters, and because of its nature it was not listed either on the *Consolation's* Work and Drill Schedule, or on that Admiral Wetherbee had written. General alarm gongs began ringing throughout the ship with their high-tongued, insistent clamor. A bugle blared from the loud speakers, and the swift patter of feet swept over the deck above the isolation ward.

Evelyn Brill caught her breath. There was something ominous in the tempo of these sounds. She turned to Vince Ayres.

"Fire, Vince?"

The bugle was blowing double time. Vince shook his head and smiled to reassure the girl. And then a bosun's pipe shrilled through the speakers, and the bosun's voice followed:

"All hands abandon ship! All hands abandon ship!"

"It's just a drill," Vince said. "Come with me. All right, everybody, lay up to your boat stations!"

He seized lifejackets and thrust one into Evelyn's hand. As they ran up the ladder, she noted the swift, synchronized pattern with which the *Consolation's* crew acted: only the four civilians seemed bewildered. Men came up from below to the loud rattling of hand chains; the general alarm gongs were still beating everywhere throughout the ship. As they reached their station near the boat assigned to them, hospital corpsmen appeared bearing stretchers and first-aid pouches.

"There's Dad!" Evelyn cried.

He smiled across at her, but he still looked pale and worried. There was a belted sentry with him. She could guess that this little interlude of make-believe action had stirred him, just as it brought a tingle to her spine. The Navy—the salt of it and the steel of it—was in their blood.

An officer moved swiftly along the deck, inspecting lifebelts, checking the boat crews and equipment. Vince caught Evelyn's arm.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

It was a bareheaded, thin-faced man in undress whites, standing by with the group at the next boat. It was John Thorpe!

The bugle sounded "Secure." The bosun's pipe shrilled

again, and the voice from all the loud speakers said "Secure!" A big chief master-at-arms hustled Thorpe below again. But everybody in the murder investigation party had seen him.

CHAPTER XXII

HERE'S A GUN

THE *Algonquin* tossed uneasily. It was just after noon; the sea had quieted considerably, and the sky was overcast. Big Mike Way sat disconsolately on the bitts while the bears dressed another man. He was a chunky and cheerful second-class gunner's mate named Alexander. Mike Way wasn't going down.

It was no use arguing with the doctor. Or with the three-striper who was in charge of salvage operations.

"I got to dive!" the chief torpedoman said. "I got to; it's important. She was my ship. Can't I be the first to open that after hatch and go inside her? I got a right to do that."

The pharmacist's mate who had spent most of the night in the recompression chamber with him grunted.

"You've got a crow, Tubes," he said, and patted the eagle on Mike's starboard sleeve. "What do you want, a pair of wings?"

"It's important as hell!" Mike insisted.

Alexander sat on the dressing bench, as nonchalantly as if he were going for a walk. The wind died, and fog came stealthily over the sea's face like a thick gray veil. It blotted out the destroyer, first, and Mike Way watched it swallow the *Consolation* and the *Westsal*. The bears put the heavy shoes on Alexander's feet and lifted the copper breastplate into place. Mike Way saw him feeling for his knife to make certain it was in its sheath.

Then they put his helmet on and helped him to the stage. It wasn't right. Another man doing Mike Way's job. He saw Alexander giving his suit air, and the stage went down to helmet depth in the water.

"Take him to the descending line."

The bubbles began drifting along the side of the ship in a silvery chain.

"Lower away."

The commander came along the deck toward Alexander's talker, and Mike Way rose.

"Commander, sir, I—"

"Nothing doing, Chief!" the officer said kindly. "We've got enough divers on the sick list, as it is. We don't want to kill anybody."

So it was no use. Mike Way sat down again, his shoulders hunched. Sometimes those ribs he had cracked or bruised in the *Starfish* bothered him. They were still sore. But a man felt just as well on the bottom—better than he did up here, knowing that there was something to look for down below.

The talker said, "He's on the submarine. Okay, Alec! Take it easy, now. Get your bearings. . . . Okay."

AN INTERVAL. Only the slap of the swells against the side, the tautening and slackening of the lines that meant air and life to the diver forty fathoms down. Mike Way was sweating despite the chill fog. He knew every move Alexander would be making, down there.

Groping aft. Walking like a man in slow motion pictures, guarding against a misstep that might plunge him

over the slippery, rounded side and into a fatal squeeze. Working his way toward that other escape hatch which no man had lived to use. . . .

"He's at the hatch."

Had to be careful, now, Mike Way thought. If there should be pressure sealed in that portion of the submarine, the hatch might fly open the instant its catch was released. Might knock Alexander over the side.

"He's trying to open it."

The minutes were adding up. Twenty minutes down there at that pressure was enough for anybody. Mike Way looked out into the swirl of gray fog and cursed his luck. If he hadn't got the bends yesterday, they'd have let him dive.

"He's having a little trouble with the hatch."

Mike Way swabbed the perspiration from his forehead. Everybody on the deck of the *Algonquin* felt the strain. Every man of them was down there, trying to help. . . .

"Alec!" There was a new note in the talker's voice. "Are you okay? Hey, Alec! Answer me. Can't you hear me?" And then a strained interval, and: "Commander, his phone's gone dead!"

The commander was taking no chances. He whirled toward the men who handled Alexander's lines. "Take him up!"

They hauled in the slack. It came, and that was all; the next swell put a strain on the lines that wasn't good to see.

"Alec! Sound off, down there. Can you hear me? See if you can get a signal on his lifeline, you guys!"

They yanked on the line, but no answering jerk came. Mike Way got slowly to his feet, wondering what had happened. The after part of the *Starfish* should be free of any gear that might entangle lines. But you never could tell, up here where the sea rolled and the fog was wet to your cheek.

"His lines are fouled, Commander. We can't hoist him."

"Vast heaving!" the officer said sharply. "We'll have to send another diver down."

Mike Way sprang forward eagerly. "Let me go, sir!" he cried. "I know the ship, Commander; let me go!"

"Get into a rig, Chief," the commander said.

VINCE AYRES went aft to the admiral's room immediately after secure had been sounded following the abandon ship drill. Before, he had been half amused; now he was angry. He knocked, and the booming voice told him to enter.

Admiral Wetherbee was in his wheelchair with the plaster cast thrust straight out on the elevated half of the

footrest. He had turned the chair to face the bow of the ship; that way, the beam roll did not disturb its equilibrium. And he was reading Mahan.

"Good morning, doctor," he said heartily. "I've been expecting you. Anything new?"

"You didn't turn out for abandon ship drill, did you, sir?" Vince asked significantly.

"In this rig? No."

"Well, Thorpe did."

The admiral's shaggy gray brows went up. "That so? Everybody saw him, I suppose?"

"Everybody. Including Captain McKee. You told me last night that you didn't know where he was. I've appreciated your help, Admiral Wetherbee, but don't you think that's going a little too far? I reported Thorpe missing. I'm delighted that he isn't, but I think you might have told me—"

The admiral waved a bony hand. "Captain McKee has already been in to see me," he said, and chuckled. "Bawled me out—first time I've had rocks and shoals read to me in years. I rather enjoyed it, doctor. It's good for anybody in this man's Navy to have a dressing down now and then. It makes you remember that no matter how much gold you get on your sleeve, there's always someone in authority over you."

"About Thorpe, now," Vince reminded him.

"Oh, yes! Well, doctor, if you'll remember, I didn't tell you a lie last night. I said I didn't know where Thorpe was—which was literally true. I left his place of confinement to the chief master-at-arms, who once did duty with me when I was in the battleships. That chief, doctor, would do almost anything I could ask."

"Very commendable loyalty, I'm sure," Vince said with considerable sarcasm. "Your putting Everett Brill out of danger was a good idea, sir. But we knew where Brill was; I could question him if the need for further questioning arose. It was different in Thorpe's case. I wanted to study that boy. I wanted to determine whether his somnambulism was real or faked. And you have him secretly locked up!"

"Just a minute, doctor!" There were storm signals in the old man's eyes. "You will understand, before the day is over, that I saved Thorpe's life by acting as I did. Also, the belief that Thorpe was dead gave the murderer a sense of false security that has helped to draw the net a little tighter."

"I can't see it," Vince said.

"You will. Sit down, doctor. And look at this. It's a Work and Drill Schedule I've drawn up for today."

Vince Ayres permitted himself a little snort as he skimmed over the admiral's fine writing. Friction with

Meet the fabulous Chinese Gordon in

DRUMS OF KHARTOUM

A dramatic and colorful novel of
Egypt in rebellion

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Beginning in the April 26th Argosy

this old man was the last thing he would have expected when the *Consolation* put to sea and murder went along with her. But now he had begun to wonder if what Victor Melhorne had said wasn't true. Admiral Wetherbee was in his second childhood.

"'2040 (or when Contact is made)' " he read. "'Trap murderer and solve tactical problem of murder mystery. Solve mystery of loss of USS *Starfish*.'" "

H SAID, aloud: "I'm afraid we're a long way from the goal you've outlined, laudable as it is. You'll excuse me now, sir; I've work to do. I'd like to ask you one thing. Has Thorpe been permitted to leave his room. Did Miss Wilkins actually see him?"

The admiral chuckled. "When she thought she saw a ghost? Yes, that was Thorpe in the flesh. I had him brought up here for questioning, and I apparently frightened him rather badly. So he was quite pale as he went back. And I had given him a pair of bed sheets; whatever storeroom or gear locker the chief placed him in had no bedding. He went out of here with the sheets draped over his shoulder."

"Then if he had the run of the ship, he could have been the person who fired at Mike Way!"

"Sea dust!" snorted the admiral. "Thorpe had no gun. I'm sure he wasn't at large at that. I impressed upon him the necessity for his keeping to his hideout, for his own protection. I also told him he was no more a sleepwalker than I am—and I hardly ever sleep."

A short time before, this old sailor had been asking Vince to draw upon his medical knowledge in an effort to determine whether Thorpe's sleepwalking was real. It amused the doctor now to find that the admiral had made his own diagnosis.

"Remember how he jumped when he knocked that glass off this bedside locker?" the admiral asked. "Well, a man who is asleep certainly wouldn't react so quickly; he'd wait until the tumbler struck his foot!"

Vince had no comment. He only asked, dryly: "What did the boy say?"

"Why, he maintained that he was asleep, of course. But I have my own idea about that. After what's happened, he couldn't very well admit he had been faking."

Vince rose to go. He said, politely: "Admiral Wetherbee, I've appreciated your assistance. But so long as I have been charged with the responsibility of running down this murderer, I must protest against any further interference from any source. Do I make myself clear, sir?"

The admiral stiffened. "Perfectly, doctor!" he growled.

Those storm signals glinted in his sea-blue eyes again. And as Vince came to attention out of respect for the old man's rank, he thought he saw another light in them. He left with the distinct impression that Admiral J. K. Wetherbee was secretly laughing.

And when he had gone, the man in the wheelchair reached for his buzzer.

"Ask one of the radiomen to step in here a moment, please," he told the corpsman who answered. And while he was waiting, he added one of the personal entries that had become so numerous in his logbook of late:

NOTE: Admirable spirit shown by Lieut. Vincent AYRES, (MC) USN. Not always found in staff officers. Forced to conclusion that nothing is holding him back so far as BRILL, Evelyn, NNC, is concerned, except her determination not to marry a Navy man. Must talk to her again about this . . .

VINCE AYRES went to the isolation ward where the other members of the party had gathered. The first person he saw as he entered the door was Captain McKee. The tall, military-looking medical officer was accompanied by the chief master-at-arms, and just now he wore an exceptionally grim countenance.

"We've been waiting for you for some time, Dr. Ayres," McKee said snappishly. "This isn't getting the murder mystery cleared away, you know."

More interference, Vince thought. The commandant might have expected it would work out this way, when he sent a medical corps two-striper to sea in charge of an investigation. He was suddenly weary of the job, sick of the whole case.

He looked past McKee and saw Martin West's fat face reflecting an enjoyment of his discomfort; and there was a superior disdain on Barbara West's magenta lips. But Evelyn Brill met his glance with warm sympathy in her gray eyes, and he knew that she understood.

Captain McKee's next words brought him back to the present, and to a quick, heightened interest: "You may wonder just why I chose to hold abandon ship drill this morning," the captain was saying. "While it was going on, a thorough search was being made of all quarters. We found this."

He held out an object wrapped in medical department gauze. The white folds fell away from the cold glint of blue steel. "The gun that was fired at Mike Way."

Vince Ayres scarcely heard these words. He was listening to a fluttery little cry that broke through the ward as everyone craned his neck to see what the captain was holding.

The sound escaped from the lips of Barbara West.

Captain McKee faced her. "Yes, Miss West," he said slowly, "the gun was in your room. Perhaps you can explain its possession."

For a space, there was strained, tense stillness in the compartment. The *Consolation* lifted on a swell, slanted down with it, and lurched slightly in the trough. From the deck forward, the shrill of a bosun's pipe came dimly, and a faintly-heard shout of "Sweepers, start your brooms! Give her a clean sweep down, fore and aft." But here in the isolation ward, there was no movement.

VINCE AYRES looked at the smartly-dressed girl. Her lips moved, but no sound came from them. She buried her face suddenly in her hands. And then Martin West was on his feet, his heavy features at first pale, then darkening under an angry rush of color.

"This is preposterous, Captain McKee!" he shouted. "If the gun was found there, it had been planted. My daughter never owned a pistol in her life; I doubt that she ever shot one."

The captain walked to the ward dressing table where an array of bottles and instruments stood, and carefully put down the gauze wrapped weapon.

"We will, of course, be able to bring out fingerprints," he said. "The gun was quite cleverly hidden—from a landsman's point of view. It had been placed well inside the mouth of the blower. Like this one here"—he indicated the megaphone-shaped ventilator on the overhead—"the blower was covered with gauze to prevent any soot from being blown into the room."

"It might have been found today, anyway, because the gauze is changed every Friday. But I instructed the search-

ing party to look inside the blowers. They happen to be favorite hiding places for liquor, non-regulation clothing, and anything else a hospital corpsman isn't supposed to have in his possession."

West made an angry gesture. "That's all beside the point. I say the gun must have been planted there. It was put where it *would* be found, so as to divert suspicion from the man who's guilty. If it wasn't, why didn't he merely throw it over the side?"

Vince Ayres said, "Perhaps I can answer that. Perhaps the person who fired it—and missed, remember—intended to use it again. Guns aren't plentiful aboard a hospital ship, you know. The *Consolation* is a non-combatant: she has no armory."

He faced Barbara West. All her spoiled pride and hauteur were gone; she was a pitiful huddle, now, shaken by frightened sobs.

"Miss West—" he began.

"I—I never saw the thing before," she wailed, lifting her head. Mascara had streaked her cheeks, and her eyes were wide and scared. "I don't know anything about it. Please leave me alone—leave me alone!"

Martin West took her in his arms, and glared defiantly at the Navy men. Captain McKee glanced significantly at Vince Ayres. Both were remembering that Barbara had cried out the instant the gun was unwrapped. Both knew she was lying.

"Dr. Ayres," McKee said, "I'll take the gun to the laboratory and have the fingerprints brought out and photographed. You will please carry on. Oh—here's the clip taken from the gun. Three cartridges gone." He turned at the door, and added: "Please remember that I expect action today!"

CHAPTER XXIII

HEAR MY STORY

MIKE WAY frowned over the side of the *Algonquin* as the bears made record time hustling him into his diving suit. Bubbles were still swinging to the heaving surface in a slender, silvery chain. Alexander was still getting air, unless there was a leak in his line. But all efforts to hoist him had failed, and the deck crew didn't dare pull any harder for fear of breaking the precious air hose.

The commander who was in charge of the salvage operations came to the dressing bench, looking worried. "You understand how to operate the underwater torch, Way," he said. "Better take it down with you. It may be necessary to cut something away. Alexander's got quite a bit of line out; he may have entered the submarine before getting caught."

"Aye, aye, sir," Mike Way said.

They weighted him with shoes and belt, got the breastplate collar over his wide shoulders, and nearly tore off his nose putting the helmet over his head in a hurry. But he cursed them for their slowness; it seemed an age before the face port was closed and he could test his air.

He opened the valve over his left breast. There was a hiss and a roar; the breastplate lifted, and the rubberized canvas suit filled, making Mike Way formidable. He felt down at his side for the copper sheath, and made sure that his knife was in place.

"Test your phone, Mike," the talker said.

"One, two, three, four," Mike said impatiently.

"Okay."

Somebody rapped twice on the resounding copper helmet with a wrench. Mike turned, shuffling toward the stage with two men to help him. His ribs were sore. It required effort to pull himself onto the swaying stage and grasp the bails with his mittened hands.

The gray water lapped over his leaden shoes. Going down. His helmet went under, and the stage stopped with a jerk. Mike tested the air again, and valved out the extra pressure by hitting the spit-valve with his chin. No leaks in the suit. The exhaust valve at the back of his helmet was gurgling merrily.

"Okay, ready for the torch," he said.

It came snaking down before him, suspended by the hoses which supplied air, oxygen and hydrogen, and the wire for the electric igniter. Mike Way thrust his left arm through a lanyard on the torch, and called for them to take him to the descending line.

His ribs hurt as the pressure built up inside his suit. But he felt fine. He was diving again; they should have let him go down in the first place. Once on the bottom, he'd get Alexander out of the jam in a hurry, and start him on his way to topside and safety. Then he could lower himself into the after escape hatch of the *Starfish*.

There was a mystery down below; waiting to be found was the explanation of why the submarine sank so swiftly, and why twenty-two men had died. It was linked, too, with the mystery of two murders or more, and with those shots which came so near to ending Mike Way's own life. He was confident that he would solve at least part of the mystery this trip.

"How do you feel, Mike?" his talker asked.

"Okay. But give me more slack—pay it out faster. Hell, man, I'm in a hurry!"

Iron Man Mike Way didn't know that Alexander was already beyond human aid. Or that death in a horrible form would reach out for him before his twenty minutes were up.

*

Extract from Admiral Wetherbee's log.

0958 Dispatched urgent priority in code to Commandant Ninteenth Naval.

1035 Learned .32 caliber automatic pistol which was used in attempt to kill WAY, Michael, CTM, has been found in room of WEST, Barbara. Is she still attempting to protect someone? Or has she been protecting, all along, her father's chances at a contract to build more than a hundred million dollars' worth of submarines? Have no jurisdiction as of present, over civilians in this case. Must depend upon Lieut. AYRES to question her.

1200 Dinner.

1300 All preparations completed for going into Condition of Readiness No. 2. . . .

VINCE AYRES was questioning both Barbara West and her father. It was virtually useless, he had decided, to attempt to glean any information from the girl alone at this time; she probably would become hysterical and cling to her statement that she knew nothing about the gun. And Vince had no taste for third-degree tactics.

He sketched the story Barbara had told before for them.

"You will understand, of course, that it is necessary to

pry into your private lives more than I like to do," he began politely.

"I'm afraid I *don't* understand!" Martin West said stiffly. "We are not Navy personnel. If police were handling this case, my attorneys would answer the questions—not us!"

"I'm not so sure about that, Mr. West. At any rate, the police aren't handling it. Now, Miss West has told us that she went out on the balcony at the hospital the night of McQuaid's murder. She wore Miss Brill's cape, to protect her clothing from the rain. She attempted to wake Victor Melhorne, at his window, to tell him you were leaving for the hotel. When—"

"We've been through all this!" the dark-haired girl flared.

"When she failed," Vince went on patiently, "she started back to the reception room, and was frightened by a man carrying a club."

"The murderer," said Martin West.

"Not likely, Mr. West. I haven't told you, but the actual murder weapon was found yesterday at the hospital. It wasn't a club, but a brick that had been taken from that vacant quiet room: the one between McQuaid's room and the diet kitchen."

Barbara West flounced around as if her chair were hot. "Oh, what's the sense of all this? What are you driving at now?"

"This," Vince said. He leaned forward, his eyes inscrutable behind the clear glasses. "You're secretly engaged to marry Victor Melhorne, Miss West, nobody but your father knows it, you said. And when you told me your story before, you were very anxious to protect Melhorne."

"Against what?" she demanded sarcastically.

"Against the suspicion—which *you* have shared, too—that he killed Lieutenant McQuaid."

The shot hit home. Barbara West's scornful laugh was strained, exaggerated. She said, "The very idea! And why would Victor have any reason to kill anybody—particularly Frederick McQuaid?"

"You didn't tell me everything," Vince said gently. "I had the newspaper files examined. Remember I asked you if your photo hadn't been in the society section? Well, we found it. You were once engaged to marry McQuaid."

The girl moaned, "Oh, what if I was? I didn't, and that's been two years ago."

Martin West grew livid and loud. "You've no business dragging that in. I've had enough of this. I'll go see the captain."

"Go ahead," Vince told him grimly. "The captain has told me that unless this thing is cleared up tonight, he's going to lock all of us up—and turn the matter over to shore authorities. I can promise you they'd be tougher."

WEST subsided. Vince glanced at Evelyn Brill, who was taking down the conversation in shorthand, with an odd gleam of triumph in his eyes.

"All right," he said. "You will agree that Melhorne could possibly have been jealous at the fact that you and McQuaid were thrown together again. You protected him, then, by affirming that he was very soundly asleep. Are you doing the same thing now, Miss West? Is that Victor Melhorne's gun?"

The girl shot him a hateful glance. Her spirit was returning.

"I've told you I never saw the gun before," she said.

"Why don't you ask Lieutenant Brill about the gun?" Martin West demanded. "And that boy, Thorpe. It's funny how he makes people think he was lost over the side, then turns up on deck today. You know that he was sore at McQuaid."

"Is it *your* gun, Mr. West?" Vince shot at him.

"It is not!"

"Very well. I'll talk to Melhorne and Bedell when they come back from the *Westsal* tonight. By that time, we will have the photographic record of the fingerprints. You have no objection, of course, to allowing your own fingerprints to be taken for comparison?"

"I certainly have!" West retorted. "We're not common criminals."

"I'd think that matter over," Vince said. "That will be all, just now. Thank you very much."

... He lighted a cigarette and looked thoughtfully through the glass into the ward. There was nobody out there he wanted to question, just now. Thorpe— He'd have Thorpe brought up later from his hiding place, wherever it was. Melhorne he'd have to face later. Bedell didn't tie in.

He remembered with a sort of shock that he'd have to ask Evelyn's father more questions: the confinement of both Everett Brill and John Thorpe had not been close enough. If a man could come up to see the admiral, he might be out of his locked room long enough to attempt a murder.

Evelyn said, "Vince, it's not a Navy gun," and he knew what she was thinking.

"No. But there's nothing to prevent a Navy man from obtaining a gun like it. And it's small enough to be smuggled aboard easily enough. The way sailors sometimes hide a pint bottle in their socks, under their bell-bottoms."

"Whose do you think it is?"

"We may never learn that," he said. "But it's a cinch Barbara West knew it was hidden in her room. She yelled before she was hurt. One thing you have to hand to her: she must really be in love with that pale-eyed Victor Melhorne. She certainly was afraid that he'd committed murder, and she still cared enough to do everything she could to protect him."

"Womanlike," said Evelyn.

He looked at her with a strange tenderness, wondering if she would do the same.

"**A**NY woman," she said softly, "will do her best to reform her man by words and prayers and exemplary righteousness. Up to a certain point, she'll moralize. After that—"

Vince smiled. "Go on, he said.

"That point is danger for her man. When he actually is in peril, she quits preaching. She'd lie and cheat; she'd even kill to save him. That's the way women are, and Barbara West is no different from the rest."

He leaned close, seeing the warm pastel tint creeping into her cheeks because of his nearness. He said, lightly: "Evelyn, if you could love me like that, I'd take your word for it. I'd promise never to commit murder, arson or even mayhem to put you to the test. And as for bigamy, why—I'd only commit bigamy under one circumstance!"

She laughed. He remembered that it had been a long time since he had heard the happiness of her laughter. It never occurred to him that for days he had been serious and worried and driven, or that in his banter he was

revealing an almost new side of his nature to the girl.

"All right, Vince," she prompted. "You'd commit bigamy if—"

"If I found you had a twin sister. Won't you marry me, darling? Oh, a medical officer's duty isn't so bad, Evelyn—not as bad as other Navy people catch. About four years of shore duty to two years at sea. And I'd even consider resigning and entering civil practice."

Somebody laughed out in the ward. Evelyn exclaimed: "Let go my hand, Vince. They're watching us!"

For a moment, enchanted at what they saw in each other's eyes, they had forgotten. The spell was broken, now. There remained a grim task to do. There was the prospect of ruin for her father; there was danger for each of them, and for all the others but one person.

They still had to find out who that person was.

IN MID-AFTERNOON, a first-class pharmacist's mate came from the laboratory with the pistol. He shook his head as he handed Vince the gun. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. "Whoever used this roscoe was mighty careful. All the fingerprints had been wiped off. All but one."

"One's all we need," Vince said. "Did you get that?"

The technician grinned. "Yes, sir. It was the skipper's—Captain McKee's. I compared it with those on his service record, Dr. Ayres."

Vince was too disturbed to appreciate the joke. "Well," he sighed—"that's that. Another blind trail. I suppose all we've got to work on now is the gun's serial number. It looks like a new weapon. I'll send the serial number ashore and see if they can locate the dealer who sold it."

"That's already been done, doctor," said the corpsman. "The admiral. He sent to the laboratory for a full description and the serial number, then he radioed the dope to somebody in Nineteenth Naval District."

"Thank you, anyway," Vince said.

All along, he thought, there probably had been a duplication of effort—the admiral likely had been requesting the same information from Intelligence that Vince had asked. Well, the old boy was one up on him, now. Vince made a mental note to call on the admiral later to ask if any answer had been received to his query concerning the purchase of the automatic.

But another radio message came first. It was an urgent priority for Captain McKee, and the tall four-striper himself brought it to the isolation ward. He appeared visibly disturbed.

"I—er—have received orders which affect you and this—er—group," he said. "With your permission, doctor, I'll read them aloud." He cleared his throat, waited for atten-

tion, and then went directly into the main portion of the message:

From: Commandant, Nineteenth Naval District.

To: Capt. W. P. McKee (MC) USN, Commanding USS Consolation.

Subject: Murder inquiry, change in command of.

1. Immediately upon receipt of these orders, Rear Admiral J. K. Wetherbee, USN (Retd.) will assume command of the inquiry into the murders of Lieutenant McQuaid and Machinist's Mate Cardoni, replacing Lieut. Vincent Ayres, (MC) USN.

2. Lieut. Ayres will continue actively in the investigation, rendering all possible assistance to Admiral Wetherbee.

3. Particular effort is to be directed along the lines set forth in the log which Admiral Wetherbee has kept, and which is of the utmost importance in this investigation.

There was a silence. Vince broke it by saying, "I will report to the admiral at once, sir." He saw resentment blazing in Evelyn Brill's eyes, and Captain McKee drew him aside.

"I want you to know that I made no report, no recommendation," he said. "This is an order, and we shouldn't question it. But what can the admiral do, doctor? He's an old man, and, what's more, he's got a broken leg and can't get around. If the *Consolation* had been assigned to the Fleet, this wouldn't have happened. The C. in C. wouldn't be putting anybody like the admiral in charge. It's what comes of being attached to a shore district."

Vince smiled, and he wasn't entirely unhappy at the order. He had an idea that somebody—and it could be no one but the admiral himself—had pulled a string to forestall Captain McKee's threat to lock up everybody and turn the investigation over to the naval authorities ashore. The admiral had rank enough to get away with such a move; he was retired, and there could be no comeback that would injure him.

"It doesn't really matter," Vince said. "I suppose the commandant lost patience. And with two murders and a third attempt, the case attained proportions commensurate with flag rank. Frankly, I'll be rather glad to get out from under."

A messenger entered and handed Vince a folded paper. He opened it and saw a penciled, schoolboy scrawl:

Doctor Ayres:

I have been thinking things over since the admiral talked to me. If you can help me by seeing that they are not too hard on me, I would like to confess.

John Thorpe, Sea. 2c.

(To be concluded next week)

Many Never Suspect Cause of Backaches

This Old Treatment Often Brings Happy Relief

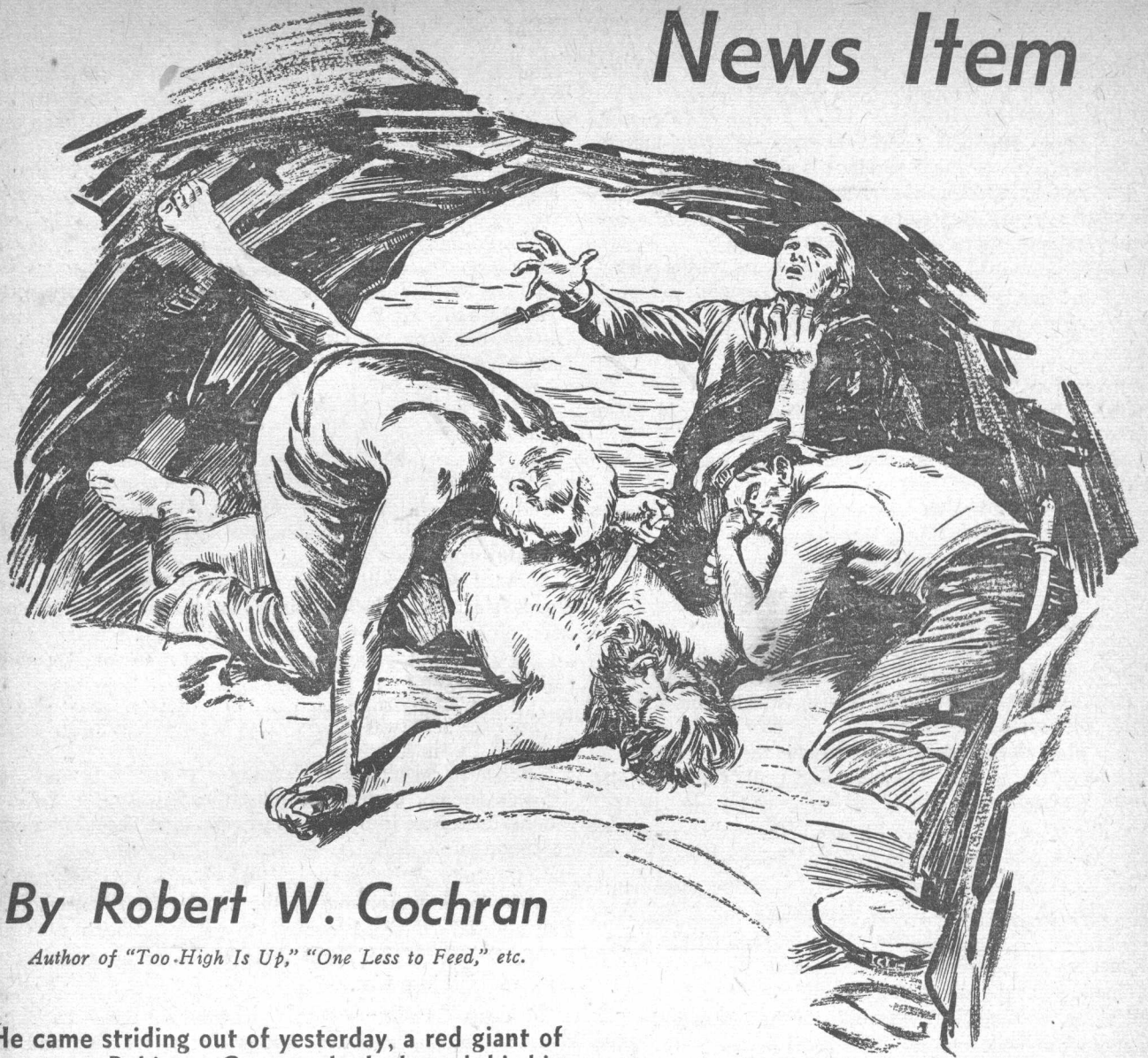
Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up

nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills. (ADV.)



By Robert W. Cochran

Author of "Too High Is Up," "One Less to Feed," etc.

He came striding out of yesterday, a red giant of a man—a Robinson Crusoe who had stuck his big hand into the whirlpool of contemporary history

Three of them fought to pin down that raging giant

TWENTY-THREE years ago, November second, 1917, to be exact, with the first World War fast approaching its climax, newspapers in this country and abroad carried the following unconfirmed news item, which came beyond a doubt via Berlin:

New York, Nov. 2.—An unidentified source discloses that the *S. S. Belvedere*, enroute from Buenos Aires to Marseille with a cargo of beef, was torpedoed and sunk in the Southern Atlantic on August 12. The survivors escaped in two overcrowded life boats.

The winter's snow made grotesque and distorted ramparts along Washington's busy streets. It was noon, and tens of thousands of government workers shivered in the chilly blasts of a sunless January day as they crowded into restaurants and drug stores for a hasty lunch.

Several score of these hurrying pedestrians were all but trampled beneath the feet of an urgent giant who plunged with unfaltering gait through the thickest throngs. He paused but twice in his headlong dash between the Union Station and that far from pretentious edifice that houses the Department of State. Each brief pause was to allow him to question an officer as to the exact location of the building that was his goal.

The tallest among the crowds through which he passed

were dwarfed by comparison. He was more than just big, he was mammoth. Had he bothered to cast his fierce blue eyes downward he would have seen only the covered heads of men and the bared heads of women.

His own fiery red hair gave the appearance of never having been subjected to the ignominy of a hat. His bushy red eyebrows were puckered to form arches, very much as though their owner retained, by some grim, compelling resolve, the determination to accomplish his purpose.

His red, unruly beard, reaching well down upon his chest, concealed all of the lower part of his face. His long, apelike arms, extending inches of their redness well below the sleeves of his ill-fitting coat, brushed men and women alike from his path with complete disregard.

His red, seared hands were gripped into tight, hamlike pistons that sent any who thought to bar his way stepping hastily aside. Quite as much by instinct as by the directions he obtained from the guard in the corridor, he made his way to a secluded office on the third floor of the building.

Actually, though the door lintel was far from low, he ducked his massive head as he crossed the threshold.

HIS voice when he spoke was in keeping with his fantastic appearance. It was rusty, and each word creaked in

a different key, like the tone of a church organ that has been stored in a dusty attic for a score of years.

"You've got to believe me," he said to the small, mild-featured man who sat upright at the scarred desk. Though he didn't say it quite as it had ever been said before.

The small, gray man, who had been a fixture while Secretaries of State and Secretaries of War and even Presidents came and went, said evenly, "Sit down."

That big red man performed the action of an uncivilized man and a domesticated dog and turned completely around in his tracks with the clear intention of sitting upon the floor. Such a demonstration from any ordinary man would have been funny, even ridiculous. It wasn't funny now; even the man at the desk didn't think it was funny. He pulled a chair forward with a quick movement of his small white hand.

"Sit there," he said, and the big red man thanked him with his eyes.

For a moment it almost seemed that he smiled, but the burnished red beard didn't part at his lips and the small man at the desk got the impression that he was talking with a man who had forgotten how to smile.

"Now," he said evenly, when the giant was seated opposite him, "what is it you want me to believe?"

The big man hunched a little way forward in his chair and his lips opened and closed soundlessly. He drew his breath into a chest that swelled gigantically and released it in an enormous sigh. His eyes, still gleaming as they had in the street with that uncivilized quality in their depths, shot this way and that about the room, like primitive man seeing four walls for the first time.

"Smoke?" The man at the desk tried to put him at his ease and pushed the glass container of cigarettes across the the scarred desk top.

The great hulking man stared hungrily for a moment, then he forced his eyes away as though he disciplined himself for some great ordeal. "No," he said, in that hoarse, creaky voice, "no, I got out the habit."

The man at the desk took a cigarette and lit it casually, not so much because he wanted it as to increase the time in which he would have an opportunity to study his visitor.

"My name," he said, finally, "is Gravecock. You're sure I'm the man you wanted to see?"

"You," the giant said, "yes. I asked in Providence, Boston, Philadelphia." He pronounced the names with the awkward uncertainty of a schoolboy. "Everyone said you could help me."

"All right," Gravecock said, "I'll help if I can." He smiled invitingly.

THE big man raised a massive fist and for the first time Gravecock saw that the thumb had been sheared off at its base. The big man looked at the scarred flesh, which clearly showed a botched amputation, and seemed to draw inspiration from what he saw there.

"It's hard to start," the man's deep, rusty voice broke the silence, "there is so much." He made a wideflung gesture with his two hands as though encompassing a world of events in what he wanted to say.

Harry Gravecock shifted restlessly. A mild and conscientious man, he had nevertheless to remember that there was a second World War afoot. If the man was some crank, the sooner he could rid himself of his presence the better.

He decided to try a different tack. Most people arriving in his office wanted a favor of some kind or other. He said, by way of experiment, "You're an American citizen?" His tone made a question of it.

"Well"—the red, tanned forehead and craggy brows went upward in a frown of concentration—"well, I don't just know."

It was now Harry Gravecock's turn to sigh. A nut, he

thought, pure and simple. But why, with all the hundred offices he could have gone to, come to him? There was, on the desk before him, a bell button that would summon one of the guards from the corridor.

He was just extending his hand, casually, to avoid alarming a man who could become dangerous if aroused, when the big man said, his voice still husky, still creaky, but taking on a kind of singsong quality almost like a chant, as though he had said the same thing unnumbered times: "There was a ship, *Belvedere*. Sailed from Buenos Aires for Marseille, cargo of beef. Sunk by German submarine, second day out. My father, third officer. Came from Boston. Was killed. I lived." He did not speak so much like a man who wanted to save words as like a man who used all the words that he knew.

Harry Gravecock, studying the man as he talked, drew one conclusion: the man wasn't a sailor. He prided himself on being able to classify the various visitors who came to see him. This time he had to admit that he was at a loss, though decidedly the man was not a sailor. He didn't walk like it or talk like it or look like it.

"When was this?" Harry Gravecock asked, certain that no ship named *Belvedere* had been sunk recently. He shot the question at his visitor.

"Nineteen, seventeen," the big man said in that same deep rusty voice.

Harry Gravecock looked at his visitor for some sign of humor. There was none. The answer had been given, apparently, in all sincerity.

Nineteen seventeen was a third of a lifetime behind him. Gravecock said in his most placating tone. "You are certainly fortunate to be able to tell about it. When were you picked up?"

Belvedere, Belvedere—he tried desperately to remember if he had ever heard anything about a ship by that name. The answer of the big red man brought him back to the present with a brutal abruptness.

"We were never picked up," the big man said. "Nineteen days in that boat." His voice rose in pitch. "No food. No water. My father dead." Resentment flared to hatred in his voice, his eyes. He was suddenly like a violent, destructive force held in check but insecurely.

"But you," Harry Gravecock persisted, "you were picked up?"

THE flaming passion died slowly from the man's eyes. "My second voyage," he said. "Seventeen years old. Ten men. Drifted nineteen days, all of them died. Other days, I drifted alone." He made again that wide, expressive gesture that seemed to encompass so much. "Two, three, four, I don't know." He patted his corrugated brow with his harsh, toil-marked fingers.

"Crazy, mad, perhaps. Cursing Germans, cursing life, death, God." A tremor shook the big, unyielding frame.

"You know," he said, and tried to smile again but failed. "when I reached the island I thought I was dead. Coconut milk"—he shut his eyes as though to enjoy to the fullest the ecstatic rapture that the milk had given him—"sweetest thing ever tasted. Slept on the beach, woke up, boat drifted away."

"What island was that?" Harry Gravecock asked.

The big man's head shook in mournful regret. "Never knew the name," he said. Then his eyes brightened. "Map," he said, and sent an enquiring gaze about the room.

Harry Gravecock found an atlas and turned to a map of the South Atlantic. With a sureness that spoke of some familiarity with maps, a big, blunt, reddened forefinger hovered for an instant and descended to where a half-dozen tiny pin points of black showed against the blue-green coloring of the Atlantic.

The man's story, Harry Gravecock thought, was on the

face of it too implausible to be a lie. He asked, "How long were you marooned?"

The challenging, savage eyes stared suspiciously. "Count it," he said abruptly, as though tired of being played for something that he was not.

"To what year?" Harry Gravecock asked, and the answer when it came brought him up straighter in his chair.

"Nineteen forty," the big man said.

"When were you born?" Harry Gravecock decided upon another direct question and was immediately sorry for it. The giant's face darkened. A look that was very near to primitive man flared for a moment in the deep-set eyes, then that ponderous but inflexible will took hold and the man was almost civilized again.

"Friend," he said, choosing his words this time very carefully, "you can't trip me. I tell you God's truth."

"But you are here," Harry Gravecock said, once more the diplomat. "You must have got away finally."

"Yes," he said shortly. "I did get away. That's why I'm here. You handle—well, cases?"

Harry Gravecock didn't smile. He didn't think it would have been wise for any man to smile at the big man's simplicity. But he saw a glimmer of light ahead. He said guardedly, "You expect to enter a claim because of what happened twenty-three years ago?"

"Not that," the giant said, "not what you think." He let his voice sink lower. "Don't want any trouble, had enough trouble." His mutilated hand came slowly upward so that he spoke as much to his hand as he did to the man before him. "They said you would help me."

"I'll help you if I can," Harry Gravecock said. "Be brief, give me just the vital facts. I'm a week behind in my work now." His friendliness took the sting from his words.

THE big man combed his battered fingers through his hair and said pointedly, "Living on an island, alone like that, everything is—what did you call it—vital?"

Harry Gravecock nodded encouragingly and the big man settled himself more comfortably in his chair. But the glance he cast on the floor at his feet was too obvious to be overlooked. Harry Gravecock thought that if it wasn't for the impression it would make on anyone coming in, he would invite his visitor to make himself comfortable on the floor.

"Mister," the red giant said, "I don't lie to nobody. I liked it out there. Water, coconuts, birds' eggs, fish, berries."

"Then at least you had a fire?"

"No, no fire," corrected the big man. "Cold, sometimes. Rainy season bad." He gave a shrug that was neither nonchalant nor embarrassed and stooping, rolled up the leg of his voluminous trousers. Harry Gravecock's face was expressionless as he saw a leg as hairy as that of any ape in the zoo. "I always was kind of hairy," the giant said half-apologetically. "Sun and rain, raw food, helped, I guess."

In spite of his desire not to put too much faith in the man's story, Harry Gravecock found himself accepting it.

"Lonesome at first, scared, too," the husky deep voice rolled on. "Caught a turtle, made a pet of him. Name was George, you know Englishman, Lord George, or something. Got chummy, George and me. Lie out there nights plannin' what we'd do to the Germans when we got a chance. Sometimes see a ship's smoke 'way off. Then I'd pray that it would be American or English ship, but they never came close enough for me to see."

"Got tired doing nothing all time, so thought of game I could play. I set one rock to another and staked it to look like the face of the submarine commander. Then I'd throw stones till I knocked it over. Fun countin' the stones, getting better and better all time."

"Plenty of stones, never ran short of stones. Then I'd

set up bigger rocks and throw from farther away. Good fun, Lord George watching just like he knew. Huns, we called them, and summer and winter for twenty odd years I kept at it. Got so I could hit a bull's-eye nine times out of ten. George liked it much as I did."

"I used to throw thirty stones a day, hot or cold, rain or shine. I figured it that's nine hundred stones a month, a little over twenty-two years; that makes almost a quarter million stones." He flexed the biceps of his arm until the muscles stood out like steel flanges.

"And the ocean always bringing me in more stones to throw. I used to remember how my old man died and wish that every one of them stones had hit a Hun. Twenty-two years is a long time to be killing Huns, and in the beginning I prayed for a German ship not to come, and in the end I prayed for a shipload of Huns so I could get even with them."

"Well, I was never a man who believed much in prayer, going to sea at seventeen, but when I saw this boat puttin' in to the lee shore one day, I was sorry I'd prayed at all."

THE big red giant stood transfixed on the beach and watched the boat come slowly nearer. The desire to run and hide was an all but overpowering one. The turtle beside him made sharp hissing sounds and moved ponderously to the water's edge and plunged in.

The boat came on and on, and not until the bow grated upon the beach and the six occupants waded warily ashore did the island's single inhabitant free himself from the spell that the boat's approach had cast upon him.

He made deep rumbling sounds that barely resembled words, and with more instinct than thought he stooped and gathered stones into his enormous hands. One of the men from the boat laughed disdainfully and leveled a gun that he carried.

The big man knew guns and what they were for, and more than that, he knew the men who had invaded his sanctuary. He looked at the leader, the neat uniform, despite the inconvenience of an open boat, the face, clean-shaven except for the small mustache, and twenty-three years dropped from his mind. Once again he was a boy of seventeen, made suddenly fatherless by an inhuman act.

It was not strange that he would remember the man responsible for his father's death and his own suffering. For more than twenty years he had been hurling stones at that imaginary figure, and now make-believe had become suddenly real.

"Bell-the-deer," he said in a whisper to himself, and tried to think why, after half a lifetime, the officer of the German submarine should follow him here.

They tried speaking to him in different languages, but to each question he was able to answer only the one thing. "Bell-the-deer," he said over and over, and his fierce eyes challenged them.

"An English swine," the officer said. "Bell the deer, bell the deer," he mimicked, and under his fluent tongue the words took on new meaning. The officer stopped speaking and stared fixedly at the red hairy man. "There's something familiar about those words. Bell-the-deer, Belvedere," he repeated, and snapped his fingers. "I have it, I was—" He stopped abruptly and approached the big man. With true German efficiency he got directly to the point. "How long have you been here?"

"Long?" the red giant repeated the word, and made a sweeping gesture that seemed to indicate immeasurable time.

The officer laughed, and the sound was echoed by his

men. "An idiot," he said. "Maybe he heard about the *Belvedere* being sunk, maybe he was on her. Does it matter?" He snapped a command at his men in German that set them to unloading the boat. There was a portable radio, but very little food and no clothing except what the men wore.

The big man withdrew a way along the beach, watching suspiciously for the first sign of hostility.

It was not a large island; there was no possibility of seven men living upon it without coming in close contact with one another. The red giant saw something that he had missed before: one of the men walked with a pronounced limp, and a second carried his right arm in a sling.

"War." The word came unbidden from out the hazy past, and he mumbled it with the unfamiliar concentration of a child trying to remember a forgotten speech.

"War!" The dry tinder of his dormant brain burst ablaze as the full implication of the boat and its occupants reached him.

In the beginning of his enforced exile he had dwelt often upon the war and its possible outcome, but for untold years he had all but failed to connect his own condition with the war. The war, for him, had concentrated into a daily throwing of stones at a make-believe enemy. But all that had changed with the coming of a boat. The war was now definitely something that he must take part in.

He watched the men, under the officer's directions, set up a temporary aerial. And though the radio was no more to him than a wireless set, he recognized in it and its use a distinct hazard. Without conscious thought of the eventual outcome of such an act, he rose and sent a stone crashing into the delicate maze of tubes and wires.

The Germans, speechless for a moment at the unexpected disaster, turned with cries of fury to where he stood. "War!" he cried, and settled another stone securely into the cradle of his enormous fingers.

The officer barked a command at his men and came alone to where the red giant stood. "You fool," he cried, "do you think we want to rot here until we die—"

"War," the big man interrupted, and only the small sharp sound of the trigger on the German's gun when he cocked it stopped him from making an attack.

"So you know what that sound means. Perhaps you're not a fool after all, you British swine. You've imprisoned us here for God knows how long with your damned blundering, but you'll pay for it."

"Bell-the-deer," the big man said hoarsely.

"*Belvedere*," the German mocked. "You'll wish you had gone down with her before I'm through with you."

IN THE days that followed, the big man was able to place vague meanings to the words that were addressed to him. He became a slave, a surly, unresponsive slave, waiting and watching for the opportunity when he would be able to turn the tables on his masters.

They ate with hungry relish the meager stores of food that he had conserved against a day of want. Dried fruits that he had learned to keep only after many dismal failures, they made jokes about and gorged themselves until they could hold no more.

It was George, coming lazily across the beach in search of the red giant, who brought the vowed hostility into open conflict. The big man, stooped at one of his endless tasks, was unaware of the turtle's approach until he heard the crack of the shot. His sharp, fierce eyes saw the friend of his long imprisonment rise upward on short, stubby legs, then sink flat upon the sand.

The cry that came from the red giant's throat was such that the cloak of civilization was thrown backward for ten thousand years, and with the sure instinct of a man long dependent upon intuition to guide him, he sent one of his

ever-present stone-missiles at the man who held the gun.

The crack that followed was not the sharp crack of a rifle shot but rather the soft, meaty sound of a ripe coconut knocked hard against a rock. There was no answering cry of pain from the man who had been struck by the stone. With a slow, swaying motion he turned half about and dropped limp upon the sand.

The big man moved in a half-crouching run, and like a pack of wolves upon the trail of a buck the sailors took up the chase.

The red giant's action, instinctive as it had been, was not that of a blundering fool. There was sanctuary, if he could reach it, a cave all but invisible from either land or sea. He had found it years and years before during one of his endless attempts to catch fish with his bare hands. With all the cunning of the wild animal that he had so nearly become, he dived into the sea, and swimming under water, attained the safety of the cave.

The night through he sat, his huge red shoulders all but touching the low ceiling of the cave. Thinking was not easy for him, because his actions had for so long been purely instincts of an intelligent animal. Yet the power to think and reason was not dead, and out of the chaos of his new danger came the realization that complete safety could come only with the destruction of the invaders.

Long accustomed to eating food cured in the sun, he found it no hardship to be deprived of the doubtful benefits of the fire that the Germans had brought with them. During the day that followed he made short journeys from the cave, watching, with only his head above water, the activity of the men about the camp.

They still worked perseveringly with the radio that he had all but demolished, but he saw, too, that they took no chances of having him return and surprise them. With military exactitude a sentry patrolled the beach between the stranded boat and the camp.

By midday he had made complete plans for his first campaign and returned to the cave, where he slept the long afternoon away. It was only with darkness that he ventured to swim close beside the boat and creep within its shadow to the beach.

THE sentry, pausing only to throw the precious driftwood on the small fire, stalked up and down near where the others reclined upon the sand.

There was no room, the red giant knew, for failure, and so with the patience of a man who has forgotten any time-piece except the sun, any calendar except the equinoxes, he waited. After more than a score of years, waiting had grown to be an expected ingredient of living.

The moon came up, to cast a faint, glimmering light upon the sea and upon the sand. The crouching form in the shadow of the boat drew further back into the concealing darkness and watched with fierce, savage eyes the pacing figure.

All other movement on the beach had ceased. While his four companions slept, the single sentry moved endlessly. A cloud, like a concealing curtain, swept across the moon, and when the silver sheen descended again upon the beach, no sentry paced before the meager fire.

The big red man still crouched in the shadow of the boat, and so swift had been his motions as he sent the deadly missile speeding to its mark it hardly seemed that he had moved at all.

He waited until the first gray dawn flecked the eastern sky before he slipped into the friendly concealing waters and returned to his cave.

From far out at sea that day he watched the unceasing search of the invaders. Had he know how to laugh, he would have laughed at their futile efforts to find some trace of his having been there.

That night he returned and saw undismayed that there was a bigger fire and that two sentries instead of one paced the beach with guns held at the ready. Low-hung clouds veiled the moon and so still was the big man's form beside the boat he all but became a part of it.

The fire waned and was refueled a score of times, and the two sentries, as the night advanced, spend more and more time in close association with each other. They made shorter and shorter journeys beyond the firelight. When the big red naked form stood erect, it was soundless as a wisp of mist from off the sea.

The arm that was like a cable of twisted steel went back, and when at last the missile sped it was with the crushing, irresistible force of a cannon ball. The only sound that marked the sentry's death was the clatter of his rifle as it fell to the sand.

Instantly the quiet was broken by the alarmed cry of the other sentry; then the two men asleep before the fire were on their feet.

Like some huge sea animal the red giant slipped silently into the water, and when a safe distance from shore he sent a single challenging cry, "Bell-ve-deer." But before the hail of lead could rake the spot, he was already far beneath the surface, moving swiftly for the shelter of his cave.

VERY, very slowly his mind was being lured into new and untried paths. One conclusion brooked no argument: These invaders were the enemies of his people and his country; they and others like them had been responsible for his father's death.

They had killed wantonly his companion, Lord George. They would kill him with unmerciful torture if they were given the opportunity. To survive he must remove them completely. With these thoughts coursing through his mind, he returned to his haven and after eating some dried coconut meat went to sleep.

It was the next day that he overplayed his hand. He had the instinctive cunning of an animal, and he had relied upon his instinct too long to desert it now for reason. He swam leisurely at midmorning far out from the island, and nowhere could he see a single sign of life. For hours he floated there, now in, now half out of the water, and his sharp eyes scanned foot by foot the entire island, dwelling particularly upon the boat and the beach near it.

The island appeared to be just as he had always known it; no plume of smoke, no pacing figure. Instinct told him that something was wrong, but reason failed to give any clear definition as to what it was.

The sun was long past the zenith when he set foot at last upon the sandy bottom and waded up the shelving beach. Guns were to him something to be wary of, but he had no fear of them. He found and paused beside the three graves where the dead men had been buried.

He felt with his huge red, hairy hand the cold ashes of the fire, made casual examination of the deserted boat. It was all very strange and mystifying, he thought vaguely, but many strange things had happened in recent days, so he accepted this too.

After an hour, during which he covered in his long, tireless lope the full length of the island, he entered the sea and swam easily to the barely discernible mouth of his cave.

Instinct and reason alike had deserted him now, for the cave had been his one safe refuge for so long he had never considered its possible discovery by those who were searching for him.

He crawled through the entrance on hands and knees; a smaller man might have entered by merely stooping. Then, as some faint warning signal burst in his brain, he felt the rough hands of the waiting men clutch at his body.

It was one to three, but if he had failed to estimate their

cunning, they had failed, too, to estimate his strength. With the rage of a giant gorilla gone berserk he hurled them from him and did not know that they fought with knives as well as fists until the dull bite of one caught him in the side.

They might have killed him, and would have except that they had left their guns behind, feeling confident perhaps that three men armed with knives could more than match the strength of any man.

They all but did, and blood flowed from a score of wounds before two of them lay with broken necks.

The third man, battered and weak, lurched from the blackness of the cave to the sun-warmed waters, and the red giant let him go, thinking that the battle could now be ended at his leisure.

He slept that night, fitfully, not being sure now that he was safe from his enemy. At daylight he came to the surface of the sea, and for the first time in his life he was afraid. The boat was gone.

HAD it been one of the seamen who had escaped, he would perhaps have let him go. But neither of the two men in the cave whom he had thrown to the fishes had been the officer. Somewhere deep in the reasoning power that was awakening in his brain was the idea that this officer had come out of his past just to kill him.

He had failed once with the sinking of the *Belvedere*; now he had failed again, but when he came next time he would make sure. The red giant climbed upon the island's highest point, and then far, far out at sea a tiny speck caught and held his savage stare.

Tired and aching from his struggle, weak from loss of blood, he was almost willing to let the officer escape. But hate, twenty-three years of hating, was not so easily discarded. The boat was large, too large for one man to handle with any ease.

His eyes were hard and cold and bright with determination when he limped down to the water's edge and plunged in.

All through those long, grueling hours the bearded giant moved on the unmarked track of the fleeing boat. Sunset at last, and darkness, and with its final shadows any thought of being able to return deserted his mind. But the silvery shimmer of moonlight made it possible to see the black dot that was the boat with all the ease of noontime.

The boat drifted with the tiniest of winds to help it, and the big man, moving now with the slackened pace of a spent athlete, came nearer and nearer.

At long, long last a hairy, brine-bleached hand came up and clutched the gunwale. There was no sound, there was scarcely any movement, but the sleeping man awoke and the gun lying ready to his hand moved with deadly swiftness.

"War," the red giant whispered, and though the gun flashed in his face, his fingers had closed upon his enemy.

It was a silent, bitter struggle, with odds favoring first one, then the other, with the regularity of a clock ticking. The big man, after the long hours in the water, was tired to the point of exhaustion. But the older man's advantages were of short duration, because forty can call up resources that sixty will never know again.

Had the red giant known compassion he might have allowed his enemy to live, but twenty years of hating had killed all else, and when the German's body was pushed overside it floated briefly and disappeared.

The big man lay exhausted until the rising sun revived him, and there was no island then on all the smooth, bright surface of the sea. He knew later in the day that he was sick but he didn't know why. And before the sun went down he was talking gibberish to himself as he tossed feverishly.

THE big red Goliath of a man looked at Harry Gravecock, a childlike intentness replacing for an instant the fierceness in his eyes. "I don't know how long I was in that boat, a week maybe. The ship that picked me up landed me at some little town in Brazil. I was afraid to do any talking till I got back here to America. Took me months to get so I could really talk again."

"It's a pretty mess," Harry Gravecock said. "By the way, you never did tell me your name."

"Gallinger, Red Gallinger. There's my side of it, too," he defended. "There is a war, even though we ain't in it yet, and if I hadn't killed them they'd killed me. They did kill Lord George."

"The turtle? Well, that was a little different."

"He was my buddy," the big man said.

One huge red hand disappeared into a coat pocket, and Harry Gravecock expected him to produce a handkerchief in proportion. But it wasn't a handkerchief he brought out, it was a strip of blue serge such as might have come off an officer's cap. There was gold lettering on it. Harry Gravecock reached for it quickly.

Von Stressburg. The name had been too much in the news the previous winter to be easily forgotten.

Harry Gravecock reached for one of the phones on his desk. Ten minutes later he had the information he wanted. The *Belvedere* had sailed from Buenos Aires twenty-three years before and had been torpedoed and sunk. No member of the crew had ever been saved. The thing that brought

Harry Gravecock upright in his chair was the information that there had been two members of the crew named Gallinger, father and son.

The *Von Strassburg* had engaged in a running fight with a British man-of-war and the British Admiralty had reported her badly damaged. This engagement had taken place the previous April. If she had exploded and sunk, it might well mean that the six members of the crew that Gallinger had seen were the sole survivors.

Harry Gravecock put the phone back on the hook. "Everything seems to check up," he said. "But you're an American citizen and this country is not at war with Germany." The right eye in the gray, lined face of the older man dropped significantly. "Just what do you want me to do?"

Red Gallinger became meek for the first time. He put his finger on the little pin points that indicated islands on the map. "It's goodish far out there," he said, "but if you could just see your way clear to sending me back. . . . I don't like it here, mister, I want to get back to where a man's got some comforts."

Two days later Red Gallinger sailed from New York in a British-owned vessel for a destination that he pointed out to the captain with a blunt, hairy forefinger.

That night the New York papers and others carried a news item in one corner of the front page:

New York, Jan. 12.—An unidentified source disclosed that the German pocket battleship *Von Strassburg* was seriously damaged in an engagement last April and later sank. All officers and men were lost.



THE DAWN-SEEKERS

Back to the beginning of man they went—two young time-detectives from the twenty-fifth century: two men who were classed as freaks, because they were tall and strong. With the speed of thought they traveled into a world where man was the prey of his ravenous neighbor; where terror stalked with the saber-tooth cat; where the bringer of fire was a god. But the secret of their journey was stranger and more awful than anything faced by Neanderthals. A powerful new novel by

FREDERICK C. PAINTON

McNALLY, I'M AFRAID

The little crackpot had a good circus, even if it was miles away from any place; but he didn't have a gorilla. And with a gorilla he could have gone anywhere, if he'd wanted to. Which he didn't. But when a guy named McNally showed up, towing a plump babe with one million bucks in the kitty, not even his trained penguin act could save him. A grand novelet about a man who was okay as long as he stuck to handling animals, by

RICHARD WORMSER

Also fine fiction by Steve Fisher, Allan R. Bosworth,
and others

Coming in next week's Argosy — April 19



Wet Beef from Mexico

By Walt Coburn

YOUNG SHAD GIBSON, the owner of the Half-circle G ranch, is determined to kill BLACK BOB HUNTOON, for Huntoon has framed a charge of cattle-rustling against him. But on riding to the Huntoon place Shad finds that the job has been done by some one else; Huntoon is dead, shot through the back. The fact that the body is seated at a table, with cards spread out before it, does not convince Shad that Huntoon was killed where he now sits. The scene is too obviously arranged.

Shad Gibson points this out to Deputy-sheriff BURT THRASHER, but the big deputy, a close friend of Huntoon's, says the case is clear enough. Shad Gibson announced he would kill Huntoon; Shad committed the murder. So Shad is under arrest.

Bitterly angry, he asks lovely RITA WAGNER to investigate the framed murder, but Thrasher tells her to stay out of it, or her brother will be in trouble. Knowing that wild TOM WAGNER has been running outside the law, Shad decides he must protect the boy; so he calmly confesses to the murder of Bob Huntoon. The justice of the peace is Miles Huntoon, the dead man's brother; and Shad can expect no leniency from him.

ONE of Shad's most loyal friends is PAT CONNITY, an alcoholic Irish lawyer; and when Pat hears the story of Shad's arrest and false confession, he takes matters in his own hands. Through Rita Wagner he gets in touch with PECOS DRISCOLL, foreman of the Wagner ranch. That night Driscoll breaks Shad Gibson out of jail.

An old partner of Shad's father, Driscoll now reveals to Shad that BILL GIBSON's death a few years before was

not an accident, but murder. And old PETE WAGNER, he says, was shot down by four white men. Driscoll's shrewd guess is that the two murders were connected with the smuggling of cattle across the Mexican Border. Both the Gibson and Wagner ranches stretch along the Border, but their owners have never permitted wet beef to be shoved across illegally.

Pat Connity and Driscoll believe that the time has come to smash the rustling combine. Connity's scheme is for Shad Gibson to ride into Mexico to the rancho of DON PABLO VIDAL, who is known to have a hand in the cattle-smuggling. Right now young Tom Wagner must be down there, for the boy is infatuated with Don Pablo's daughter, ROSITA, called the Golden Rose. Taking refuge at the Vidal rancho, Shad should be able to learn something about the Huntoon murder.

ON the trail into Mexico Shad catches sight of a soaked bundle, which turns out to be the jacket of Black Bob Huntoon. Apparently it was cached in the hills, only to be washed down here by the heavy rains, and it proves that Huntoon was not murdered in his shack. But there's more to it than that, for wrapped in the jacket is a money belt containing ten thousand dollars.

The money belt strapped around his waist, Shad Gibson arrives at the Vidal hacienda, to be greeted warmly by Don Pablo. But after a rest Shad finds a curious change in his host's manner, and it is soon evident that Don Pablo has been informed fully about the Huntoon murder. He tells Shad there is a ten-thousand-dollar reward for his capture. But not a state reward—a private matter. Perhaps Señor Gibson can understand why the sum is precisely ten thousand dollars—no more,

This two-part serial began in last week's Argosy

no less. Don Pablo, then, must know of the money belt. Shad expects gunplay, but the entry of Rosita prevents that. She is charming to Shad, and that night she takes him for a stroll. But Shad is on guard; and when the Golden Rose contrives to fall into his arms, he is aware of her hands searching for and finding his money belt. Then their embrace is suddenly interrupted. A hoarse voice cries out: "You she-devil! You two-headed snake! Lyin' to my sister—makin' love to my girl! I'll kill you both!" ...

CHAPTER V

DAGGER OF THE ROSE

IT WAS wild young Tom Wagner. A split-second before his gun roared Shad threw Rosita over backward and behind the thick bent trunk of the live-oak tree. He went over after her, jerking out his gun.

Tom Wagner's bullet grazed Shad's ear. The drunken young cowman was coming toward the tree at a lurching run. Shooting wildly as he came. Shad crouched in front of the girl, gripping his gun. Bullets thudded into the tree trunk and whined past his head. The tree trunk giving him and the cowering girl a barricade.

Shad counted the shots. Four. Five. Six. Then he jumped, clearing the bent tree trunk. Charging young Tom Wagner who stood there on unsteady legs, a smoking empty six-shooter in his hand.

Shad swung his six-shooter like a club. Its long barrel thudded against the side of Tom Wagner's head, knocking him down. Shad was on top of the fallen, dazed man, rolling him over on his face, yanking his arms behind him, tying his wrists behind his back with the silk neckscarf he tore from the young cowman's throat.

He heard a sound behind him and threw himself sideways and onto his feet. He grabbed Rosita's arm, spun her around roughly, twisted her wrist behind her back in a hammerlock. His hand took the long thin-bladed knife from her hand. Then he let her go and grinned.

Rosita was breathing like a spent runner. Her golden eyes looked reddish in the moonlight. The blood was drained from her face, leaving her golden skin almost chalky white.

"Gringo!" she spat at him. "Fool!"

"I don't reckon I have too much sense, at that." He grinned at her. "I don't know which of us you aimed to shove that pig sticker into."

Shad caught a brief glimpse of a man dodging back into the black shadow of some brush. He jumped in behind the bent trunk of the wishing tree, cocking his six-shooter.

"Come out from behind that brush or I'll start shootin'!" Shad barked harshly. "Pronto!"

"You all right, Shad?" The man behind the brush called out. Shad gave a start as he recognized the lazy Texan drawl of Pecos Driscoll.

"If you are, there's no need me comin' out. Don't call me by name."

"I'm all right. I had to knock Tom Wagner cold. He's comin' alive again. I got his hands tied behind his back."

"I'll be gittin' along, Shad. I got me a wolf trapped back in the hills. Sober Tom up and make him talk. So long."

Rosita Vidal had regained something of her composure. She brushed leaves and some dirt from her Mexican peasant dress and her white teeth flashed in a smile.

Shad saw Pecos Driscoll vanish into the night, get his horse and ride away. Tom Wagner groaned, tried to get to his feet and couldn't make it. He commenced cussing as he sought to free his hands.

Rosita held out her hand toward Shad. "I'd like to have my knife back. I promise not to use it. I lost my temper

for a minute. I have you to thank for saving my life. Tomas is *muuy borrochon*. Too locoed drunk to know what he was doing. He needs a cold bath and some sleep.

"Poor Tomas. When he is not drunk he can be very sweet. Give me the knife and I will cut his hands free and we will all go to the house, no? The sound of shooting will be alarming Don Pablo. He and his vaqueros will be coming any minute now."

Shad shoved the knife into his red silk sash and picked up Tom Wagner's empty gun. He ejected the empty shells and re-loaded the six-shooter.

"I'll give you back your knife later, Rosita. And when Tom here gits sobered up he kin have his gun back."

SHAD reached down and yanked Tom Wagner to his feet. Tom was tall and slim with reddish hair and gray-brown eyes that were bloodshot and congested now from whisky and lack of sleep. A stubble of reddish beard marred his almost too handsome young face.

Tom kicked savagely at Shad, lost his balance and would have fallen over backward if Shad had not grabbed him by the collar of his denim brush-jacket. He slapped Tom twice across the face with the palm of his hand.

"If you were sober and any kind of a man I'd give you the damndest fist whippin' a young fool ever got. Where have you bin for a week? You'd better have a good alibi, young rooster. Otherwise you'll hang for the murder of Black Bob Huntoon. Talk fast and talk straight."

"Bob Huntoon? Dead?" Wild young Tom Wagner's drunken bluster was gone. He looked sick and scared and bewildered. Then something almost like tremendous relief showed on his unshaven face. But sullen anger overcame his other emotions. His bloodshot eyes glared at the girl. His mouth twisted in a sneering grin.

"Tell your tow-headed lover where I've been for the past week!" he snarled at her.

Men on horseback were coming from the direction of the ranch. The voice of Don Pablo could be heard shouting orders.

"Scatter out, hombres! Search the brush! Take the gringo Gibson alive. If any harm has come to my daughter I want to torture that gringo until his screams will be heard in Hell!" He was shouting in staccato Mexican.

"Better holler out that you're all right and for him to call off his hombres," Shad spoke to Rosita. "Otherwise there'll be some dead Mexicans eating breakfast in that same Hell he's hollerin' about. And my first shot will knock Don Pablo out of his saddle. I'm playin' for keeps. If you want to save your father's life, start hollerin'!"

Shad Gibson had a six-shooter in each hand. He had stepped in behind the twisted curved trunk of the wishing tree. His voice was brittle. His lips were pulled flat in a mirthless grin.

"Papa! Papa *mio*! Send the vaqueros back. I am all right. Nobody has been hurt! Nothing is wrong! Ride back to the house, Papa. The shooting was an accident. A mistake. Nobody is hurt. Ride back and take the vaqueros with you. Pronto! Or perhaps you will spoil everything!"

"Nobody has hurt your daughter, Don Pablo. Nobody has been shot. There are only some bullets in Rosita's wishing tree. No harm has been done."

Don Pablo had drunk too much before supper and afterward. He was drunk enough to want to use his gun.

Tom Wagner had been drinking hard for a week. He might make a fool of himself. He started to shout something. Shad yanked him in behind the tree and his gun barrel thudded down across the young cowman's head. He dragged Tom's unconscious form in behind the brush, and motioned Rosita to sit on the trunk of the wishing tree. He sat down beside her.

"Play your part, *chiquita*," he said as they watched Don Pablo riding alone toward them, "or your good mother will be a widow. I'll shoot first and shoot to kill. Tell him we wished on the rising moon. If you love your father, Rosita, make a quick wish now that a tow-headed gringo will spare his life."

DON PABLO rode up at a run, sliding his horse to a halt. He was wearing his shabby brown leather charro clothes and the sombrero ornamented with silver and gold. He was fully clothed, even to his spurs. Don Pablo, who should have been in bed, had not dressed hastily. He had been dressed and ready to make a night ride. In his hand was one of his silver-handled, beautifully etched six-shooters which he wore when he rode on any sort of business that took him from his hacienda.

"*Madre de Dios*, Papa!" laughed Rosita. "Put away that gun. Ride back to the house."

"There was shooting! Who was killed?" Don Pablo's voice was harsh. His black eyes glittered in the shadow of his big sombrero.

"The shooting was harmless. Nobody was shot." Rosita's laugh was soft and almost genuine.

"Who were you expectin' to be shot, Don Pablo?"

"Has that gringo Burt Thrasher—"

"Burt Thrasher has not been here, Papa."

"But you expected him, no?" Shad grinned.

Don Pablo stared hard at his daughter and this tow-headed, grinning gringo. With no little effort he regained what calm he could summon out of an alcoholic rage.

"You are wanted by the gringo law, my *amigo*. The Mexican border does not stop man hunters like Burt Thrasher. I promised you protection. I heard shooting. There is the matter of a ten-thousand-dollar reward."

"And there is the matter, *señor*," said Shad Gibson, "of the murder of Black Bob Huntoon. I did not kill Bob Huntoon. Neither did Tom Wagner. I would give ten thousand dollars, myself, to know who murdered Bob Huntoon."

"And now," said Rosita Vidal, "I think we are getting somewhere. Ride on back home, Papa. The man who killed Bob Huntoon robbed you of ten thousand dollars. I think I can tell Shad Gibson who killed Bob Huntoon. Now ride back, Papa. I think perhaps that Burt Thrasher is back in the mountains, caught in a wolf trap."

"*Por Dios*, child!" exploded Don Pablo. "I hope you are not moon locoed. That you have not forgotten that you are the daughter of Pablo Vidal. You would not sell out your own father to a gringo?"

"I want to talk to Shad alone, Papa. When I sell you out to anybody I hope to lose my soul forever. Have I ever failed you, *Papacito*?"

"No. No," repeated Don Pablo heavily. He reined his horse and rode back the way he had come, muttering, shaking his head.

"Whew!" Shad grinned at the Golden Rose of San Luis. "And any second I was scared Tom would come awake and start a fuss and we'd be sunk. He's stirrin' now."

Shad gave Rosita her pearl-handled dagger.

"Cut Tom loose. Keep your knife. Was Don Pablo robbed of ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"If you got back that ten thousand dollars for your father, would you tell me the name of the man who killed—"

Rosita shook her head; tightened a hand over Shad's arm, and pressed close to him—dangerously close.

"Not for ten thousand dollars. Not for anything but something that money cannot buy. I love you, Shad. Marry me and I will tell you who killed Bob Huntoon. I will tell you who killed your father, Bill Gibson."

SHAD caught his breath like a man who has been hit hard. This was the Golden Rose of San Luis. Men had fought to the death to win her smiles. She was the most beautiful woman Shad had even seen. There had been a time in his life when he had been willing to fight anything or anybody to win her love. Then there had been a swift and bitter quarrel.

What had been a mad infatuation on Shad Gibson's part had turned to a sort of loathing and contempt and hatred. And after that he had met Rita Wagner and found what he knew to be a wholesome and splendid and loyal friendship between a woman and man which had slowly ripened into the sort of love that a cowpuncher dreams about.

And now, this. This calling him back to that infatuation for a Mexican *señorita* who had laughed while men fought and killed one another to see who would win her deceptive smiles.

Shad had worshipped his father. Bill Gibson had been more like an older brother that a youngster idealizes. Hero worship is a small name for the bond that had always been between Square Bill Gibson and his son Shad-rock. If Rosita Vidal could tell him who had murdered Bill Gibson, then Bob Huntoon, then . . .

"It's a deal, Rosita. All I want is a chance to kill the man who murdered my father. To clear my name of a murder charge don't matter so much. I have the money that Bob Huntoon was packin' when he was shot in the back. It goes to whoever it belongs to. I shore don't want it."

"But I don't aim to have it taken off me by any kind of force. Let Don Pablo prove his ownership and the money's his. All I'm after is a shot at the man that killed Bill Gibson."

"There's a padre at the ranch. And I reckon any man along the Mexican Border would call me the luckiest hombre in the world to be marryin' the Golden Rose of San Luis—"

Rosita Vidal's soft laugh was in Shad's ears. She kissed him swiftly; then, the knife in her hand, she went into the brush. Shad followed her, still dazed by the sudden turn of things. He was trying to get used to the sudden fact that he was going to marry Rosita Vidal. That all the dreams and hopes that he had shared with Rita Wagner were broken and shattered.

Shad saw Rosita kneel beside Tom Wagner who lay on the ground, his hands tied behind him. He saw her knife slit the silk neck handkerchief that bound Tom Wagner's hands. Then the blade raised as if to strike. Tom Wagner twisting, rolling, grabbing the hand that held the knife. Tom Wagner, teeth bared, eyes like burning coals, rushing Shad, the knife in his hand. Words ripped from a dry, tortured throat. Words that called Rosita Vidal and Shad Gibson fighting names.

Whisky and rage giving wild young Tom Wagner the strength of ten men for a few brief minutes.

Tom Wagner was tall and slim and hard-muscled. The knife in his hand stabbed and ripped as it struck, hitting bone. The slender blade snapped at the hilt. Tom Wagner's head struck Shad's jaw. Then Shad felt a thudding blow on his head, and the roar of a gun was in his ears. Everything went black.

Shad Gibson was out as cold as a rock. Blood spilled from the stab wound in his left shoulder. The broken blade of a dagger protruded an inch or two above his borrowed white silk shirt and leather charro jacket. There were powder burns on Shad's straw-colored hair where a six-shooter had exploded as the barrel crashed against his skull and the hair-triggered gun had tripped and fired the cartridge that had grazed Shad's skull.

CHAPTER VI

THE RAIDERS

SHAD felt the sloshing of water in his face. A Texan drawl sifted through that black oblivion. "Take 'er easy, son. You got a thick skull and you don't bleed easy. But you shore look like the man that was sent for and couldn't git there. Hell's about to pop and you don't want to miss out on the big fireworks."

It was the lazy Texan drawl of Pecos Driscoll.

"There was a ruckus," Shad told Pecos as the lanky Texan fastened a tight bandage around Shad's shoulder. "I was fool enough to let Rosita cut Tom Wagner loose. He grabbed her knife and charged me. Butted me in the jaw and stabbed me and grabbed back his gun that I had in my belt. He was chain lightnin'. Locoed mad."

"I got Tom a-coolin' off. I tied him down in the crick with his face above water so's he won't drown. Every time he starts a-faunchin' and a-fightin' his ropes his head gits a duckin' and he swallows some more water."

"And Rosita?"

"She got away from me," said Pecos. "While I was ropin' Tom and draggin' him down through the crick at the far end of a ketch-rope tied to my saddle horn, that little hellcat got away. Hightailed it for home."

"It's gone, Pecos."

"What's gone?"

"Ten thousand dollars in a money belt I had under my shirt. She knew I had it. Don Pedro knew I had it. Ten thousand dollars. Black Bob Huntoon had that money belt buckled on him when he was murdered along the trail somewheres. I don't know where Bob Huntoon got that much money, but I found it wrapped in his jumper. The high water had washed it down from where it had bin cached."

Shad explained briefly about the brush-jacket with the bullet hole in the back.

"It's tied to my saddle. Bob Huntoon's brush-jacket."

"It was tied to your saddle. Don Pablo has it now. And I reckon the Rosita lady got the money belt. I saw her fussin' over you when you was knocked out and I was draggin' Tom down the crick. Your shirt is pulled out and that red sash tore off you. Rosita Vidal collected that money for her old man."

"She claimed it belonged to Don Pablo."

"Then," Pecos Driscoll grinned twistedly, "Don Pablo is the man that's bin holdin' young Tom Wagner for ransom down here in Mexico. That's where Tom has bin for a week unless he's lyin' to cover up some ornery thing he's ashamed of."

"He claims that Rosita out-foxed the Mexican outlaws that had him hid back in the hills under guard. That she got him free about noon and fetched him to the Vidal ranch. She had him hid out somewhere in the house. He claims his likker was doped. That he woke up and saw her walkin' off with you in the dark."

"He cold-trailed you. Lost his head and went plumb locoed. He's coolin' off and gittin' sober. Ten minutes or so and he'll make sense. But he's still dead stuck on Rosita. I told him you was makin' a play at her just to learn what could be learned. Find out anything?"

"Rosita knows who killed my father. She wants to marry me."

"Not the way I figger it. She wanted to see you and Tom fight. She let Tom overhear you two a-talkin' about gittin' married. Then she got her knife back and cut Tom loose and let him grab the knife. She's tricky. She wanted that money you was packin'."

"She shore got it," said Shad grimly.

PECOS said he reckoned that young Tom Wagner was cold sober by now. They went down the creek to where Pecos had tied Tom down in the creek.

"Got a-plenty, Tom?" asked Pecos.

"I'm waterlogged and chilled and twice as sober as a preacher. The orneriness is drug outa me, Pecos. Honest. Shad, I've acted like a damned fool. Pecos has told me about a few things."

Tom, dripping wet, shivering, stood on the creek bank. Pecos fired questions at the sodden and bruised young cowman.

"Black Bob Huntoon had a money belt with ten thousand dollars in it when he was killed on the trail between his place and the Vidal ranch. What do you know about it, Tom?"

"It's not any too clear, Pecos," said Tom Wagner. "I lost a lot of money to Don Pablo gamblin' down here. About ten thousand dollars. I got half sober and decided to pull out for home. Get back to town in time to stop payment on the checks I'd written. But if you think you kin ride away from the Vidal ranch at night when Don Pablo don't want you to go, just try it."

"I was stopped at the barn before I could git my horse. Don Pablo's men fetched me back to the house. I felt as cheap as a plugged 'dobe peso."

"My young friend," Don Pablo says in his oiliest voice, 'could it be possible that you are running away in the night? That you have some notion of stopping payment on your checks? Don't you know that between real men a gambling debt is a debt of honor?'

"I'm not a strong character," Tom Wagner went on bitterly. "I told Don Pablo that I was ashamed to have my sister know I'd gambled away ten thousand dollars."

"He turned fatherly right then. Said that he understood how I felt. But that a debt of honor was something that had to be paid, regardless. And he poured me a drink."

"He had a plan, he said, that would get him his ten thousand dollars and at the same time save me from the disgrace of tellin' my sister I'd gambled away that money. His Mexicans would take me into the hills. I would send a note to Miles Huntoon sayin' that I had bin captured by Mexican bandits and was bein' held for ransom. I would make out a check to cash. Don Pablo would send the check and note to Campo by Black Bob Huntoon who was at the Vidal ranch with me dickerin' for stolen cattle."

"The idea sounded like the one and only way out. I wrote the letter and made out a check for ten thousand dollars. Gave the check and letter to Black Bob Huntoon to deliver to Miles Huntoon at Campo. Then I rode off into the hills with a couple of Don Pablo's vaquero cattle rustlers."

"And that's where I've bin for the past week," finished Tom Wagner. "Yesterday Rosita showed up and said Don Pablo had sent for me. We rode back to the Vidal ranch together."

"She said that somethin' had gone wrong. She didn't know just what. Don Pablo would talk it over with me later. We rode in by a back trail and she smuggled me into the house. She made me promise to stay in my room. She said you were at the ranch dickerin' with Don Pablo for a secret gate to be put in your Border fence."

"I was all in. Worry and not much sleep and I'd bin drunk for a week on mescal and tequila. The drink she gave me tasted queer. Bitter. She said there was somethin' in it to make me sleep. I drank part of it and spilled the rest out the window."

"She thought I was asleep. Drugged. But I heard her ask you to go with her to her wishin' tree to watch the moon rise. I trailed you there. I damned near killed you both. I'm still crazy jealous about her. I'll git over it. Rosita

Vidal is the most beautiful girl in the world, but she's colder blooded than old Don Pablo, treacherous as a golden tiger."

"Better forgit her for a spell, Tom," said Pecos. "We got some chores to do. You and me and Shad here. Burt Thrasher and one or two of his hired hands have trailed Shad here. They're at the Vidal ranch right now. We don't know who killed Black Bob Huntoon but I'd gamble that Thrasher's the man who waylaid Black Bob who was fetchin' that ten thousand dollars to Don Pablo."

"Thrasher's scared of Miles Huntoon. He hid the money in Black Bob's jumper, packed Bob's dead carcass to his cabin, planted it there to trap Shad. Thrasher had to kill Bob Huntoon's dog to git in to the cabin. He knowed that Shad was goin' to fight it out with Black Bob where he found that black-headed cattle thief. Because Black Bob Huntoon had told Rita Wagner that if she didn't marry him he'd send her brother to the pen at Yuma."

"Thrasher had to work fast. I think you almost caught him red handed there at the cabin when he set Bob Huntoon's dead body in a chair, dealt some cards to make it look like Bob Huntoon had bin playin' solitaire. Thrasher forgot to pull off the dead man's gloves. He got outa the cabin, circled around, met Shad when he was ridin' away from the Bob Huntoon place and arrested Shad for murder."

"Thrasher come back to find that money. I sighted him huntin' all over the brush for it. If he finds out that Rosita Vidal or Don Pablo has that ten thousand dollars he murdered a man to git, then Thrasher might not hesitate to do some more killin'."

"He's at the Vidal ranch right now. Rosita wasn't half as clever as she figgered when she took that money belt. Let Burt Thrasher find her with it and that money belt is the Golden Rose of San Luis' death warrant. We'd better be movin'. Here's your six-shooter, Tom. You're goin' to need it."

"Rosita knows who killed Bill Gibson and Pete Wagner," said Shad. "I aim to make her tell me. You think it was Burt Thrasher, Pecos?"

"Burt Thrasher and the two Huntoons. Miles Huntoon engineered the two killin's. He's the brains. Black Bob and Burt Thrasher done the actual work. That's my guess."

"And I'm bettin' that Don Pablo knows the story that backs up that guess of mine. So let's git goin'. I don't know how big the odds are stacked ag'in' us but we're tacklin' 'em. Ol' Pecos Driscoll and the sons of Bill Gibson and Pete Wagner. Let's go, boys!"

THEY made a strange looking trio as they went on foot through the park of live-oak trees. Tall, lanky, homely Pecos Driscoll in his faded old overalls and short denim brush jacket, a head taller than either of his younger companions. His legs were bowed and he walked with the stiff-legged gait of an old time cowhand. Battered hat pulled at an angle across his head, cartridge belt and holstered six-shooter slanted across his lean flanks. Awkward on foot but dangerous, nevertheless.

Young Tom Wagner, his cowpuncher clothes still sodden, boots squishing with every step from wet socks. Shivering a little, nerves on edge from his sudden and drastic sobering up. A desperate glint in his bloodshot eyes as he limped along.

Shad Gibson in bloodstained leather charro clothes and bloody white silk shirt. Hatless, bandaged, a twisted grin on his face. He walked, his gait easy, sure-footed, his hand brushing the butt of his holstered gun.

They were still a couple of hundred yards from the corals and adobe buildings that showed plainly in the moonlight, when they heard the sudden sound of shooting. Men were cursing in two languages. Suddenly horses bolted into the night with empty saddles. Then a couple of badly

scared Mexican vaqueros were spurring and whipping their horses to a dead run as they headed for the open country beyond. There was the shrill and terrified scream of a woman. The scream choked off abruptly.

"Kill the damned greaser! We got the doublecrossin' old *paisano*— Watch that she-hellcat, boys! She'll knife you!"

Pecos gripped young Tom Wagner's arm, holding him back. He growled a warning as he pulled his gun.

"Hold on, Tom. Take 'er steady! We won't win a damn thing by chargin' 'em. That's Burt Thrasher a-hollerin'. He's got his tough hands with 'im."

Guns popped. Men yelled hoarsely. Mexican women and children were shouting, frightened, panicky. Doors slammed shut. Dogs barked. Burt Thrasher's half dozen tough hands were riding around shooting off their six-shooters. Burt Thrasher, killer and cattle rustler, was taking over the San Luis rancho.

"He's either locoed or drunk or he's got an ace in the hole," growled Pecos Driscoll. "Burt Thrasher and his renegade deputies is shore bustin' things wide open. Keep to the shadows, boys. Foller me."

Burt Thrasher's men had located Don Pablo's wine cellar. They were getting drunk, shooting off their guns, driving the Mexican families into the inadequate shelter of their little adobe homes. The men rode their horses back and forth as they waved bottles and brandished six-shooters and carbines.

"I count six of 'em," said Pecos. "How many do you boys tally?"

It was hard to get the exact count on the gringo raiders. Shad said he reckoned Pecos' tally was right.

"I can't stand much more of that, Pecos. If they start hurtin' women and kids, I'm cuttin' loose."

"Take 'er easy, Shad. Tuck in your shirttail," cautioned Pecos as they ran and dodged through brush and between buildings and corrals, keeping as much as they could to the black shadows.

"They'll git their drinkin' done," added Pecos, "afore they git wild enough to harm the wimmen. That'll take some time—"

Young Tom Wagner gave a grunting cry. He had seen one of the riders trying to ride down a woman with a baby in her arms. But it was Pecos Driscoll's six-shooter that blotted out Tom's curse.

The tipsy rider swayed drunkenly in his saddle. The horse whirled, lunged forward, head swinging as its rider toppled sideways from his saddle and hit the ground with a thud. The man lay there in a motionless heap, a shattered bottle gripped in his dead hand.

"You know how to git into the house, Tom," said Pecos, ejecting the smoking shell from his six-shooter and shoving a cartridge into the empty chamber. "Lead the way. Git. Nobody noticed what happened. We're still lucky."

TOM WAGNER led them at a run. The three went into the rambling adobe house by a side door. Shad knew his bearings. At the end of a arched corridor, which was lighted by candles in wall niches, was the private office and smoking room of Don Pablo.

From behind the closed door of carved black oak came the muffled sound of voices. The dead bodies of two of Don Pablo's vaqueros lay in the corridor. One of Burt Thrasher's gringos was squatted on his heels, his back to them, trying to twist the cork out of a bottle with the blade of his jack-knife.

Shad Gibson covered that fifteen feet of dimly lighted corridor with a couple of long leaps. The man twisted around. Shad landed on top of him, gun barrel swinging. The gun thudded against the man's head with a sickening crack that shattered bone. The man went limp. Pecos and

Tom Wagner were right behind Shad as he got to his feet, the man's six-shooter in his left hand.

Pecos had taken the guns of the two dead vaqueros. He handed one six-shooter to Tom and kept the other. They halted at the closed door, crouching, listening, watching the corridor.

Burt Thrasher's harsh voice sounded clearly from within the room beyond the closed door.

"This is the payoff, Vidal. You got that ten thousand dollars. Before I git done with you, you'll beg for a chance to tell me what you done with it.

"Pull his boots off, Loys. Then roast his bare feet with that candle. If that don't work, we'll start in on Don Pablo's Golden Rose of San Luis. I'll learn her to stick a knife in Burt Thrasher. But before we git busy with the candle burnin', git your ears full of this news, Vidal. We're takin' the San Luis Grant.

"Yeah. Takin' 'er legal. Miles Huntoon got the papers for it. And, you didn't have sense enough to know that the San Luis Grant takes in the Gibson and Wagner ranches north of the Border.

"Miles Huntoon dug up the old records. The State of Arizona will have to give him the Gibson ranch and the Wagners' Campo ranch. Miles Huntoon's claimin' 'em. He sent me down here to tell you to git to hell off the San Luis Grant or git run off. And to fetch him the Golden Rose of San Luis.

"You figgered you could marry your daughter to Miles Huntoon! By grab, that shore is a good 'un. Miles Huntoon ain't marryin' no damned Mex. Miles wants her to dance fer him and sing songs to him.

"This is the payoff, Pablo. You got some money you collected on young Tom Wagner's hide before your men killed him. Bob Huntoon told me all about it when I left Campo with him to see that he got along all right.

"Black Bob said he was killin' Tom Wagner if you didn't git the job done. That neither of you could afford to have that drunken young whelp runnin' off at the head. But Bob didn't kill nobody. He met up with bad luck. When I find Shad Gibson, he'll hang for that murder.

"But in this here office of your'n I found Bob Huntoon's jumper with a bullet hole in the back. It laid there on the floor. Whoever found it found ten thousand dollars in a money belt. Before I git done with you and your Golden Rose of San Luis, you're handin' over that ten thousand bucks.

"I killed one man to git it. I'm not stoppin' at just one killin'. The feller that's pullin' off your boots likes to hear a burnin' man holler. The two fellers holdin' that daughter and wife of your'n hates Mexicans. Miles Huntoon owns the San Luis. I'm ramroddin' the spread for him. Git to work on the old man first. Then the old lady and the Golden Rose of San Luis."

"I've stood all a man kin stand!" Young Tom Wagner's face was drained of blood. He started to open the door.

"Steady, sons!"

Pecos Driscoll's homely face twisted in an ugly grin. He kicked the door wide open. He went in fighting, Shad Gibson and young Tom Wagner at his back.

CHAPTER VII

HANDS ARE WEAPONS

SHAD GIBSON saw Don Pablo tied in his chair, his boots pulled off, a man on one knee with a lighted candle that he was holding against the Mexican's bare feet.

On the other side of the room Señora Vidal and Rosita were sitting in chairs, arms tied behind their backs. Two

renegade white men with six-shooters stood guard over them.

Burt Thrasher sat on the desk, one spurred boot touching the floor, the other leg swinging. A bottle of whisky in one hand, six-shooter in the other. There was a grin on his heavy-jawed face and his bloodshot eyes glinted in the candle light.

The six candles in the heavy silver candle holder, placed on the desk near where the burly deputy sat, furnished the lighting for the room. Then it was wiped into sudden darkness as Burt Thrasher, moving with surprising speed for a big man, knocked over the candle holder. He shot at the same instant, just as Shad leaped at him, swinging his gun like a club, not daring to shoot for fear of hitting one of the women or Don Pablo.

Thrasher and the three men with him had been taken by surprise. Their guns blazed wildly. Pecos leaped on the man holding the candle. The barrel of his six-shooter crashed down on the man's skull.

"Thrasher's my meat!" Shad shouted above the roar of guns.

He felt the burning sting of Thrasher's bullet grazing his ribs. Then he was on top of the big deputy and they were crashing over the desk and onto the floor. Shad fought to grab the big man's gun which kept blazing almost in his face. Burning powder stung his flesh. He grabbed Thrasher's gun arm at the wrist, twisting, jerking. His own gun clubbed the deputy's head. They rolled over and over on the floor, crashing into the chair where Don Pablo sat tied, overturning it. It was a fight to the death.

At the other side of the room young Tom Wagner charged the blazing guns of Thrasher's two men who were shooting wildly. He dove low under the crimson streak of one gun and when he knocked the man down, fell on top of him. A bullet tore Tom's thigh. Kicking and clubbing, he kept on fighting.

The third man made a rush for the open doorway where the dimly lighted corridor showed. As he reached the doorway he made a good target. Pecos Driscoll, crouched near the doorway, fired once. The man stumbled, fell, rolled over on his side, then lay still.

Shad Gibson had tackled a tough customer. Thrasher out-weighted him fifty pounds and the deputy was all bone and beef. Shad had gone into the room with a gun in each hand, dropped one when he tackled Thrasher in the dark, and now Thrasher's huge hand had grabbed the barrel of Shad's gun and was bending and twisting it, while Shad kept his grip on the big deputy's gun wrist.

The weight and brute strength were Thrasher's. Shad's right hand was losing its grip on his gun as Thrasher bent his arm back. His hold was slipping on the deputy's thick wrist which yanked and jerked like a horse kicking in his face. He was losing his fight.

Burt Thrasher rolled on top of Shad, his two hundred pounds pinning Shad down. Thrasher's head was close to his. The deputy's whisky breath was in his face. The big man's weight was crushing Shad's ribs. Shad was losing his fight to the man who had killed his father.

Shad let go his hold on the big deputy's wrist. Let go his own gun. His two free hands grabbed for Burt Thrasher's throat and found it. Clamped like fingers of steel. His long legs swung up and around Thrasher's hips and held like a vise, feet locked together.

A choked cry burst from Thrasher's throat. The big man's wind was shut off as if by the closing jaws of a steel trap. He fought with a strangling desperate fury. The gun in his hand roared and the bullet struck the tile floor only a few inches from Shad's head, whining as it ricocheted.

Thrasher's heaving weight rolled Shad from underneath, but he still had his long legs clamped around the big man's thighs and his two hands had Thrasher's throat in a death grip. Thrasher's gun exploded again and the bullet missed Shad's head by sheer luck.

Burt Thrasher's breath was coming in whistling gasps. His heavy body was losing its strength. He clubbed desperately at Shad's head. A blow of the gun barrel glanced off Shad's cheek and nose and the pain was sickening. Shad fought off dizziness and clung to the deputy's swelling, strangling throat. Thrasher's breath was rattling now.

The big man's gun barrel kept striking at Shad's head, hitting his shoulders, banging against the tile floor as Shad, fighting from underneath, tried to keep the strength from ebbing out of his hands and arms and legs.

Dimly, as if he were in some horrible nightmare, Shad heard shooting. Heard a woman screaming. Heard the voice of Pecos Driscoll as if from some far distant place.

Shad could not feel any more pounding at his head and shoulders. Burt Thrasher's two-hundred-pound body was a dead weight on top of him now, motionless, inert. Shad's senses reeled in a black nauseating whirl. He used every last shred of strength and will power to keep his legs locked around the big man's thighs. To keep his fingers sunk deep into the corded swollen flesh of Burt Thrasher's throat.

That was the last that he remembered—that will to hang on with his hands the way a bulldog grips with its teeth.

THEN his senses returned. Cold water was splashing in his face. Somebody was trying to pour whisky down his throat. Somebody was telling him to swallow. Another voice was telling him to break his hold. Hands were pulling at his wrists and fingers.

He gritted his teeth and clung harder. Then his eyes opened and he blinked into the bright candle light in front of his face. Pecos Driscoll, his face smeared with blood, was grinning at him like some bloody ghastly mask.

"Let 'im go, Shad! Break your holt! You got the big son choked to death! You done killed Burt Thrasher, boy! Killed him with your bare hands! Let go his neck! Break away, Shad boy!"

Shad's fingers let go their death grip. His legs lost their scissors hold. Somebody rolled that heavy weight off his chest. Shad sat up with dizzy painful effort, Don Pablo's lean hands helping him, steadying him. Shad looked into the black, swollen face with its bulging eyes and protruding tongue and knew that the face belonged to Burt Thrasher.

Hanged men looked like that. Shad had seen a hanged man once when he was a boy. He, Shad Gibson, had done that with his hands to the man who had killed his father.

Pecos Driscoll covered the dead man's face with a faded blue denim brush-jacket he had found in the room. The jacket had a bullet hole in the middle of the back. Black Bob Huntoon's brush-jacket.

"Where's Tom Wagner?" Shad found his voice.

"Rosita and the *doña* are helping the padre dress his wounds," said Don Pablo. "Drink this, my young *amigo*. It is twenty-year-old whisky."

It occurred to Shad that there was no longer any shooting outside or in the corridor. Pecos answered the question in his eyes.

"We got 'em as they come chargin' into the house. Young Tom and Don Pablo and me. It was like ketchin' fish when they're bitin' good. Them gringo sons come a-chargin' in to kill and plunder. They run slap-dab into a hornet's nest.

"Don Pablo had got loose from the chair he was tied to and grabbed a gun. Young Tom fought like a wildcat.

He stopped three-four bullets that'll slow him down for a few weeks but he'll live. That padre is the best doctor in the country. And from the way it looked when they carried him into her bedroom, the *Señorita Rosita* is the only nurse that wild young cowhand will be needin'."

Pecos adjusted the bandage that had slipped from his bullet-torn cheek. Grinned widely as Don Pablo handed him a filled glass.

"*Señors*," said Don Pablo, "*Compadres*. You have saved my life and the life of my good *señora*. And you have saved my daughter. We are forever in your debt. *Salud!*"

LATER, when the padre had dressed Shad's bruised shoulders and head and the bullet rip along his ribs, when they had sat with the wounded Tom Wagner until he dropped off to sleep, holding tightly to Rosita Vidal's hand, Shad and Pecos and Don Pablo went into the office, which had been cleaned and scrubbed of the last bloody traces of the battle, and Don Pablo handed Shad the filled money belt.

"The money belongs to Tom Wagner and his sister. You will return it to her. And now if you care to listen I will tell you what I know concerning the murder of Bill Gibson and Pete Wagner."

"That's the main reason why Pat Connity sent us down here," said Pecos Driscoll. "He figured that somehow we'd git to the bottom of the whole thing."

"Black Bob Huntoon is dead," said Don Pablo. "Burt Thrasher is likewise dead. Those are the two men who did the actual killing from what I have gathered from time to time from their drunken boasting.

"But the man who planned it was Miles Huntoon. I give you my word *señors*, I had nothing to do with the murder of those two men. Until a month or so ago I had believed their deaths to be accidental. Then the actions of Miles Huntoon caused me to be suspicious.

"Miles Huntoon paid us frequent visits. He came to pay court to my daughter Rosita. But in order to win my approval of his courtship, Miles Huntoon offered me a proposition.

"He told me that he would one day own both the Gibson and the Wagner ranches. Then, he said, the Gibson fence would be opened. He and I would join the two big ranches that would take in all the range on both sides of the Border.

"There would no longer be any necessity for my vaqueros to steal cattle from my Mexican enemies whose ranches join my San Luis Grant. The man knew of my great ambitions; he knew I would go to any lengths to get what I wanted. He knew of my desire to marry my daughter to a man of wealth and power.

"He is a man who is not unattractive to women. Rosita has something of my love for power and wealth. Not until an hour or so ago when she thought young Tom Wagner was dying did she ever show an honest and real love for any man.

"Now you see me a defeated man. I stand before you humbled and sincere and willing to do my share in repairing any wrong I have caused. Rosita has found the man she loves. I am content to give up the San Luis Grant. I have enough money put away to last me and my wife. I am content to live somewhere in a modest manner the rest of my days. The prayers of the good *doña* have been answered.

"If you hope to catch Miles Huntoon you had better work fast. News travels swiftly. When he hears of Burt Thrasher's defeat here he might lose his nerve and quit the country. Though perhaps not. He is a shrewd and ruthless man.

"Burt Thrasher was not lying when he said that Miles

Huntoon has dug up old documents that will hold in a court of law and give him the San Luis Grant, including the Gibson ranch and the Wagner Campo ranch. I have an old map that so defines the borders of the San Luis Grant. And it will be hard to prove a charge of murder against a man as clever as Miles Huntoon."

"That," said Shad grimly, "is a little matter that we won't be callin' on the law to settle. Thrasher and Bob Huntoon are dead. Miles Huntoon is the next man on the list. Cartridges are surer and cheaper than lawsuits and provin' a murder charge against a man like Miles Huntoon. I've got a cartridge with his name on it. So has Pecos. And I reckon it's time we hit the trail for the cow town of Campo, eh, Pecos?"

CHAPTER VIII

BRAVE FLAG OF IRELAND

IT was sunrise when Shad Gibson and Pecos Driscoll, bandaged, weary-eyed, grim-lipped, rode up to Miles Huntoon's house at the edge of Campo. They swung from their saddles and while Pecos watched the rear of the adobe house where the judge lived with a Mexican housekeeper, Shad pounded loudly on the front door.

Nobody answered his pounding, and he made ready to smash in the door. But the door was not locked. A turn of the handle opened it. He went in with his gun in his hand, and Pecos entered by the rear door which was likewise unlocked. They met in the hallway. A quick search of the house showed that it was empty. They looked at one another, chagrin and bitter disappointment in their eyes.

"Looks like Miles Huntoon got some bad news and quit the country," said Shad. "He's got away on us."

But his bed was made, his clothes hung up in his closet, his whole house in order. There was no indication of anything like a hurried departure.

"We'll try his office. He might be there."

They rode down the main street to his office which was a modest adobe building on Campo's main and only street.

On the door was tacked a notice: *Closed Indefinitely*.

They peered through the uncurtained window. The office was empty. There was no use in searching further for their man. Pecos said that perhaps Pat Connity might know something of Miles Huntoon's disappearance but there was little hope in their hearts as they rode on down the street, headed for Patrick Henry Connity's place at the other end of town.

They told themselves that Miles Huntoon had gotten word of the fight at the Vidal ranch and had quit Campo for parts unknown. Pulled out in the night. When the sleepy little cow town of Campo awoke and started about its daily business the citizens, mostly Mexicans, would find that notice tacked to the door of the office of Judge Miles Huntoon, Justice of the Peace. It was a bitter dose for Shad Gibson and Pecos Driscoll to swallow after a night's hard and weary ride.

Before they sighted Pat Connity's house, which was off the main street and hidden from sight by mesquite and palos verdes trees, Shad and Pecos heard sounds that caused them to sit erect in their saddles and look at one another in puzzled bewilderment. Strange sounds were shattering the peaceful silence of the desert sunrise.

Shouting. The barking of dogs. The beating of a drum. The unmistakable voice of Patrick Henry Connity lifted in song. Singing *The Wearing of the Green*. Smaller, shriller voices taking up the tune and the words.

Then they reined up, staring. The Irish flag with its golden harp on a green background fluttered from the

top of a high flagpole in front of Pat Connity's house. And around the flagpole marched as strange a procession as the two men had ever seen.

Patrick Henry Connity in a clean white suit, wearing a green tie and a large shamrock in his coat lapel, led the procession. Behind him marched the half dozen small Murillos wearing caps made of bright green paper. Aurelio, the oldest of the boys, was pounding a drum. The wire-haired dog O'Banion, a large green ribbon tied in a bow knot around his neck, barked and charged about, scattering stray chickens.

"Pecos," Shad's voice lost something of its bitter disappointment, "what day of the month is it?"

"Somewheres around the sixteenth-seventeenth of March."

"Saint Patrick's Day," said Shad, grinning. "Saint Patrick's Day in the mornin'."

ONE of the small Murillos was the first to sight the two riders. He shouted something in a shrill excited voice. The procession halted, piling up in confusion. The drum whammed a final boom and went silent. Pat Connity's song broke off in the middle. He shouted loudly at the open door of his adobe house.

"Rita! Carlos! Mamacita Murillo! It's Shad Gibson and Pecos Driscoll back from the San Luis ranch. And they look like they're just returned from the wars!"

Rita Wagner came running out. She was wearing a green dress and a green ribbon in her hair. Carlos Murillo, following, had a shamrock pinned to a pinkish silk shirt. The buxom Señora Murillo wore a green sash around her ample waist.

Rita Wagner gave a little sob as Shad swung from his saddle and took her in his arms.

"Tom?" she whispered "What's happened to Tom?"

"A whole lot," Shad grinned down at her fear stricken face, "and all of it good news. Tom's all right. He was never in better shape in his life."

"God and Saint Patrick be praised for that bit of fine news on this Saint Patrick's Day in the mornin'," said Pat Connity. Then he turned to the six small Murillos, a wide grin on his red face.

They stood there in their green paper hats, dressed in their Sunday clothes, scrubbed until their brown skins shone, huddling together in wide-eyed awe at the two bandaged cowpunchers.

"Aurelio, Pancho, Jaoquin, Pasqual, Margarita, Lupe," he called the roll of the small Murillos, "Tell Shad Gibson and Pecos Driscoll the great news. All together now. One, two, three, go!"

"Queen Isabella . . . has . . . six . . . pups! Born on Saint Patrick's Day in the mornin'!"

The chorus started weakly, timidly, gained strength and confidence, ended in shrill shouting. While O'Banion ran in circles, barking. And the Murillo dog Queen Isabella, a lady dog of mixed parentage that favored bird-dog ancestry, appeared in the cabin doorway, tail wagging. As if taking her cue to accept proper and fitting applause.

Carlos Murillo pointed to Queen Isabella and laughed. His wife beamed. O'Banion cavorted and barked and licked Queen Isabella's face. Then Queen Isabella, also decorated with a green ribbon, went back into the house where she had left her six newly born puppies.

"Rita and I sat up all night with her," said Pat Connity. "The first puppy came at a quarter past midnight. And now it's a bit of a drink we'll be havin' while Aurelio and Panchito, Jaoquin and Pasqual put up your horses."

"And you can be tellin' us how you come to be bandaged like a couple of mummies. And it's good Irish whisky ye'll be takin' to wash the dust of the trail out of your

throats. Come inside, now, the both of ye. If ever two men looked like they had need of a nip—"

"We'll take a drink, I'll tell a man," said Pecos. "Then we'll saddle two fresh horses and hit the trail. We're after Miles Huntoon, and we ain't stoppin' till we cut his sign."

"Ye'll be needin' no fresh horses, then. Unless it is that from here to the jail is too far for a couple of cowpunchers to walk." The bright blue eyes of Patrick Henry Connity twinkled.

"Jail!" blurted Shad Gibson.

"AND I've got the key in me pocket and Miles Huntoon looked like a fine feathered rooster in a coop. With his tail feathers pulled. Thanks to my good friends Carlos Murillo and Dwight Smith and their bright legal minds and the sharp teeth av the O'Banion and the two fists av Patrick Henry Connity." Pat Connity blew gently on bruised and swollen knuckles and did a jig step. Then bowing elaborately to Rita Wagner.

"Aye, and to the courage av the fairest colleen in any land. To Rita Wagner goes the credit for faith and courage and that rare gift in a woman, the ability to keep a silent tongue in her head." He beamed at Shad and Pecos.

"That curly wolf baited his own trap with as clever a bit av shenanigans and forgery as ever was perpetrated. Never countin' on the legal minds of such men as Dwight Smith who knows the last bit of land law in the West, and Carlos Murillo who is the grand master of Mexican law and the transfer of titles of old Spanish Grants. Miles Huntoon did bait his own trap.

"The charge against him is grand theft and forgery of legal documents. There's the graver charge of murder that I'm hopin' to prove against Judge Miles Huntoon, the dirty scut!"

Shad Gibson took a stained little red-backed tally book from his pocket and handed it to Pat Connity.

"This belonged to Black Bob Huntoon. Rosita Vidal managed to get hold of it once before it was stained by water. In Bob Huntoon's handwritin' somewhere in this tally book is evidence that will prove that Miles Huntoon hired him and Burt Thrasher to kill Bill Gibson and Pete Wagner.

"Black Bob put it in writin' and Miles Huntoon's name is signed to it and it's witnessed by Burt Thrasher. Black Bob was holdin' it as a weapon against his brother Miles in case Miles tried to double-cross him. None of those thieves trusted one another."

Pat Connity nodded. "Miles Huntoon knows now that Burt Thrasher killed Black Bob Huntoon. One of Thrasher's men sold that big deputy out to Judge Huntoon. Miles Huntoon planned to kill Burt Thrasher for that murder of his brother after the law had sent Shadrock here to Yuma prison.

"Burt Thrasher's killin' was to be passed off as the result of somethin' else and the killin' would be made to look like self-defense. The man who sold Burt Thrasher out to Miles Huntoon sold Miles Huntoon out to Patrick Henry Connity for more easy money. There is no honor, as the sayin' goes, among thieves.

"And now," Pat Connity smiled, "we'll drink the health av the O'Banion who bit a hunk out av the leg av Miles Huntoon while I was swingin' me fists. Later we'll pay Miles Huntoon a bit av a visit at the calaboose. To the O'Banion and Queen Isabella!"

THE morning hours were taken up with the festivities of Saint Patrick's Day. The men drank Irish whisky. Rita and Señora Murillo sipped lemonade colored red

with berry juice for the small Murillos. Dwight Smith joined them for the banquet prepared by the Señora Murillo and served by Rita Wagner.

Pecos told the story of the battle at the Vidal ranch. Because of the women and wide-eyed little Murillos he passed over the killing of Burt Thrasher with the simple statement that Shad Gibson had done the job.

"Patrick Henry Connity," dapper little Dwight Smith announced in a crisply worded speech, "will be sworn in as the new justice of the peace here at Campo. I know of no man better fitted for that honor."

Dwight Smith's speech called for much cheering. Another drink. More pink lemonade for the almost-bursting small Murillos.

The banquet over, Pat Connity took Shad Gibson and Pecos Driscoll over to the jail.

"Give me the jail key, Pat," Shad had suggested earlier in the day. "Pecos will loan me his six-shooter to give to Miles Huntoon. I'll give him a fightin' even chance for his life."

"That job," Pecos had protested solidly, "belongs to me, son."

"The Law," decided Pat Connity with a finality that forbade further argument, "will hang Miles Huntoon."

He repeated it now as he unlocked the outer door and led the way into the gray shadowed jail.

At the barred door of Miles Huntoon's cell they halted suddenly. The perfectly tailored body of Judge Miles Huntoon hung by a short length of rope tied to the ridge log and looped around Miles Huntoon's neck. The man had stood on a chair to adjust the rope for his hanging, then had kicked away the chair.

A signed confession had been written out and left on the bunk. Pat Connity spoke in a hushed tone.

"Get on back to the house, Shadrock. Pecos and I will attend to things here. Last night when I took the man his supper he asked for pen and ink and paper and a ten-foot length of rope. It was not for me to refuse a prisoner a simple request. Nor was it for me to ask questions. Call it cowardice or courage. It is not for us to judge. Amen."

Shadrock Gibson walked a little unsteadily out of the gray shadow of the adobe jail and out into the bright March sunshine. Rita Wagner was waiting for him at Pat Connity's house.

There were plans to make. The uniting of the three ranches that straddled the Border. The tearing down of the ten-wire Border fence for which there would be no further need.

Don Pablo would still own the Mexican half of the San Luis Grant. Shad Gibson and the Wagners would be running the Half-circle G and Campo Ranches. There would also be the annexing of the Walking H and the Drag T outfits. Shad had a filled money belt to give to Rita. And they would be leaving soon, Shad and Rita, for the Vidal ranch where the padre would perform a double marriage.

There would be a great fiesta there at the old San Luis Rancho. Pecos, Pat Connity, Dwight Smith, the entire Murillo family would attend the wedding fiesta. The opening of the fence that would unite the Arizona and Mexican halves of the old Spanish San Luis Grant would be a ceremony attended by Border Patrol officials.

It was good to walk in the bright sunshine of Saint Patrick's Day. Shad saluted the Irish flag that moved limply in the breeze. Rita Wagner, O'Banion at her heels, walked toward him.

THE END

3114—Argosy—April 12—



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



AS YOU know, we have a half a dozen analysts among our readers, who grade the fiction and determine our average by the month or year. One of them is with us this week, a gentleman who sends in an annual report.

He doesn't seem to think anyone notices his ratings. Now we do, as we've said more than once; we find these scorecards not only interesting but helpful. Moreover, our guess is that most readers enjoy seeing estimates of stories they've read. For one thing, these ratings give them the opportunity to disagree, and that is a thoroughly normal American indoor sport.

STANLEY HAYNES

Although I am a bit late with this my fifth annual report on the state and condition of ARGOSY, I am sure that since nobody would have missed it in the first place and in the second place nobody wants it, I will be pardoned.

1940 has, after a slow start, shown ARGOSY to be a much improved magazine toward the close, I believe. A number of the old and much-liked authors have been reappearing between its covers and some of the younger displayed excellent ability.

The find of the year, as far as I am concerned is a short-story writer by the name of Robert Arthur. How about a short biography of him, and others, in future ARGOSIES? "Postmarked For Paradise" was his best.

And now for a few figurative Blue Ribbons:

Best Fantastics:

The Green Flame—North
Minions of Mercury—Beyer

Best Historical:

Bugles Are For Soldiers—Warren
The Devil's Doubloons—McCulley
The Harp and the Blade—Myers

Topnotch West:

(Have to Wait 'till '41)

Humor:

(Not enough even with H. H. Conroy)

FREE! 136 PAGE BOOK ON FISHING

NEW!

PEACH-ORENO

1941 Fish-getter. Ask any dealer.

SOUTH BEND BAIT CO.
602 High St., South Bend, Ind.

"Flip-Teez"

— A NOVELTY STRIP TEASE —

The newest and most sensational novelty you've ever seen! 6 beautiful models in WARM, living colors! 25c each or all 6 for \$1.00. Will be sent postage prepaid. Check your selection below and send this with coin or currency. Don't forget to include your name and address plainly printed. Send to:

FLIP CARD CO., 123 N. W. 23rd St., Miami, Fla.
Please send the following FLIP-TEEZ cards for which I enclose \$.....

☐ MING TOY ☐ COWGIRL JONES ☐ DUSKY LIZA
☐ CARLOTTA RHUMBA ☐ RED-HEADED CASSIE
☐ BRENDA, THE DEB

The Talk of All Sportsmen!

SOLID STEEL ROD

\$1

Detachable offset handle, diamond knurl grips, hi-carbon oil-tempered blade, argentine guide and top, 4' length, all metal cadmium plated. At dealers or postpaid in U. S. for \$1. Catalog free. **PREMAX PRODUCTS, Div. Chisholm-Ryder, 4199 Highland, Niagara Falls, N. Y.**



Earns Living Writing—Before Finishing Course

"I had no job, no chance of getting one. I have always had the desire to write. I saw your ad, borrowed the money to pay for the course. Before finishing your course I had become self-supporting as a correspondent for the state papers. I believe that if anyone wants to be a writer and will apply himself to your course, he will soon know whether his living is coming out of the writing market."—Edward Foster, Talihina, Okla.

writing for some time. That is why so many authors and writers spring up out of the newspaper business. The day-to-day necessity of writing—of gathering material about which to write—develops their talent, their insight, their background and their confidence as nothing else could.

That is why the Newspaper Institute of America bases its writing instruction on journalism—continuous writing—the training that has produced so many successful authors.

Learn to write by writing

NEWSPAPER Institute training is based on the New York Copy Desk Method. It starts and keeps you writing in your own home, on your own time. Week by week you receive actual assignments, just as if you were right at work on a great metropolitan daily.

3114—Argosy—April 12—

How do you know you can't write?

Your writing is *individually* corrected and constructively criticized. Thoroughly experienced, practical, active writers are responsible for this instruction. Under such sympathetic guidance, you will find that (instead of vainly trying to copy someone else's writing tricks) you are rapidly developing your own distinctive, self-flavored style—undergoing an experience that has a thrill to it and which at the same time develops in you the power to make your feelings articulate.

Many people who *should* be writing become awestruck by fabulous stories about millionaire authors and therefore give little thought to the \$25, \$50 and \$100 or more that can often be earned for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on business, fads, travels, sports, recipes, etc.—things that can easily be turned out in leisure hours, and often on the impulse of the moment.

A chance to test yourself—FREE!

Our unique *Writing Aptitude Test* tells whether you possess the fundamental qualities necessary to successful writing—acute observation, dramatic instinct, creative imagination, etc. You'll enjoy taking this test. It's free. Just mail the coupon today and see what our editors say. Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York. (Founded 1925)

NOTICE—Men "21 to 35"

No need to hesitate to test your writing ability, even though you are of conscription age. N.I.A. agrees to refund in full the tuition of anyone accepted as a student who is subsequently called for military service.

Free Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Ave., New York

Send me, without cost or obligation, your *Writing Aptitude Test* and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. _____
Mrs. _____
Miss _____
Address _____
(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.) 99D361

MACHINE SHOP MEN

Learn to set up and run ANY kind of machine; MAKE MORE MONEY NOW by learning quickly HOW TO DO THINGS which usually take years of practice. The demand for SKILLED men is ALREADY ahead of the supply, then WHAT WILL IT BE A MONTH OR TWO FROM NOW?

Bigger Pay Don't miss this chance to qualify for promotion. Eight Big Books chock-full of important mechanical facts told simply and clearly. Over 3000 pages, nearly 3000 illustrations cover Tool Making, Pattern Making, Foundry Work, Mechanical Drawing, Forging, Machine Shop Practice and Management, and hundreds of other subjects.

8 Big Books (Up-to-date Edition) Sent FREE to you for examination. With them we send a Big Binder of nearly 800 pages with 267 original shop tickets with 1200 illustrations. These show how to set up and run almost any kind of job and are in addition to the 8 books. Check up on any facts you want to. Note their great MONEY MAKING value, then, if you want them, pay on the easiest kind of payments. A year's consulting privileges with our engineers now given with these books without extra charge. American Technical Society, Publishers—Home Study Courses.

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY

Dept. X2510, Drexel at 58th Street, Chicago

You may send me the 8 big NEW books and binder of shop tickets for free examination. I will pay the delivery charges only. If I decide to keep them I will send \$2.00 in ten days and \$3.00 per month until the total price, \$34.80, is paid. If I return them in 10 days I will owe you nothing. You also agree to give me a certificate entitling me to consulting privileges with your experts for one year without extra charge.

Name.....

Address.....

Please attach a letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address and that of at least one business man as reference.

BACKACHE?

Try Flushing Excess Poisons
And Acid Thru Kidneys
And Stop Getting Up Nights

35 CENTS PROVES IT

When your kidneys are overtaxed and your bladder is irritated and passage scanty and often smarts and burns, you may need Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules, a fine harmless stimulant and diuretic that starts to work at once and costs but 35 cents at any modern drugstore.

It's one good safe way to put more healthy activity into kidneys and bladder—you should sleep more soundly the whole night through. But be sure to get GOLD MEDAL—it's a genuine medicine for weak kidneys. Don't accept a substitute.

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthes. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write:

CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 28, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

INDIGESTION

may affect the Heart

Gas trapped in the stomach or gullet may act like a hair-trigger on the heart. At the first sign of distress smart men and women depend on Bell-ans Tablets to set gas free. No laxative but made of the fastest-acting medicines known for acid indigestion. If the FIRST DOSE doesn't prove Bell-ans better, return bottle to us and receive DOUBLE Money Back. 25c at all drug stores.

66

8114—Argosy—April 12—

ARGOSY

Sports:

Touchdown, Professor!—Philips
Appointment in October—Warren

Miscellaneous:

The White Oomailik—Pierce
The Little Doll Died—Roscoe
The Old Haverton Try—Cockrell

Also, I have a few suggestions for improving Argosy, as I would have it: Give Max Brand a good dose of Kildare's favorite remedy and get him writing something else for a change, for example "War for Sale." Disembowel with a good sharp sword both Cleve and d'Entreville. Ignite ten sticks of dynamite with a short fuse under Roy Horn's bombards. And finally, fill Odin's cup with Tuttle's prune juice desert dew and pour down Ketchum's throat. Pardeeville, Wis.

YOU are now well acquainted with the improved Argosy, which offers you a large, clear type and sixteen additional pages. We feel confident that the changes we have made will be heartily approved by our readers, and we have definite reason for our confidence.

As soon as we announced the change to larger type and the increase in size, letters began to pour into this office. We received thousands of them, many from readers who had already expressed disapproval of the small type that was our first experiment. Fine, they said in unison; give us a larger type and more pages, and we are with you.

There were so many of these letters that we cannot possibly publish them all; but here are a few excerpts: "I notice in your March 1 issue an announcement that you are going to print a larger type. I hope therefore that I will again enjoy reading your magazine." . . . "Your statement announcing the use of larger type changes my mind, and as I like all your writers, I shall continue to read Argosy." . . . "I venture to say that the majority of your old readers would be in favor of the old type."

Clearly we have now solved the difficult problem of Argosy's format. But the solution would never have been reached if we had not received the aid of thousands of readers. They showed us the way, and for their loyalty and keen judgment we are deeply grateful.

—THE EDITORS

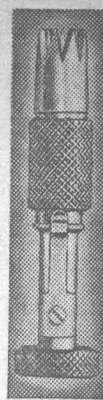
HAIR IN NOSE IS UGLY—

Long, ugly nostril hair is unpleasant to behold, annoying. PULLING NOSTRIL HAIR MAY CAUSE DANGEROUS INFECTION. Well-groomed men need—

SEND SANI-CLIP

\$1. for removing superfluous nostril and ear hair. MONEY BACK GUARANTEE. PULLS APART TO CLEAN. ORDER SEVERAL. A SWELL GIFT! So easy to use.

to MALCOR PRODUCTS, Dept. M.
54 CLINTON ST., NEWARK, N. J.



BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn \$2,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. About 20,000 Certified Public Accountants in the U. S. We train you thoroughly at home in spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays," LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 458-H Chicago
A Correspondence Institution

WANTED FOR CASH!

UNUSED U. S. POSTAGE

ALL VALUES. 90% OF FACE VALUE.
IMMEDIATE PAYMENT. EST. 1933

STAMP ACCOMMODATION SERVICE
DEPT. M-2 90 JOHN ST. NEW YORK

AUTOMATICS

Shot—32-Cal. No. 067

Fine blued finish; accurate hard shooting; well constructed; smooth working; good quality. Pocket size, 3 1/2" overall, wt. 2 1/2 oz. \$5.95
25 Cal. German Automatics; Finest made; 7 shot Vest pocket size \$11.45
Holsters Open 75c; Flap—\$1.25; Shoulder—\$1.75.



Bargain Price List, Rifles, Police Goods, Badges, Air Guns, Telescopes, Binoculars, etc. Send stamp, please.

LEE SALES CO. (Dept. MS) 35 W. 32nd St., N. Y. City



There's a new smoking thrill waiting for you when you light up a LA RUMBERA CUBAN CIGARETTE. Made from choicest Cuban tobaccos, in the real Cuban way. You will really enjoy this tropical smoke. Carton of 10 packs, either white or brown wrapper, postpaid for \$1.25 per carton—stamps, check or money order.

RAUL GARCIA Y CA. Box 732, Tampa, Florida

DO YOU WANT TO MAKE MONEY

with your

OWN HOME BUSINESS?

Then write to: (No obligation)
P. O. Box No. 36, Station "N",
New York City

Results Assured! Use Mme. GLICKLICH GRAY HAIR COLOR RESTORER

A proven preparation for home use. Applied like a hair tonic. Guaranteed to restore to Gray or Faded hair the natural, youthful color. Will not rub off or wash out. No artificial, dyed look. Harmless. 8 oz. bottle, \$1.00 with this ad. (Regular price, \$1.50.) Sent prepaid in plain unmarked wrapper. ORDER TODAY. Money back guarantee. Mme. M. GLICKLICH, 741 Lexington Ave., Dept. MS, N. Y. C.



Suffer Varicose LEG SORES?

IF you suffer pain and misery of Varicose Ulcers, or open Leg Sores, send away at once for FREE Booklet "THE LIEBE METHOD FOR HOME USE." Tells all about this 40-year-old method, praised and endorsed by thousands. Liebe Methods, Dept. D-42, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

PRICE SMASHING SALE!

Genuine-Late UNDERWOOD NOISELESS

NOW
\$31.85
CASH

Only 60c a Week



Mfrs. Orig.
Selling Price
\$125.00



Special Price
While 87 Last!
POSITIVELY
LOWEST EVER
OFFERED

Truly the most outstanding offer I have given my customers in years! Only because of an exceptional purchase can I sell these rebuilt Underwood machines at the sensational low price of \$31.85 (cash) or on easy terms of 60c a week. Each one carefully gone over and refinished so it looks like a brand new machine costing over three times as much. *The mfrs. orig. selling price on this machine was \$125.00.* It's sent to you in Underwood packing box with Underwood book of instructions on care and operation.

A NOISELESS MACHINE!

Latest achievement in typewriters! Provides writing perfection with SILENCE. A machine for those who want the advantages of a quiet home or office. This Underwood's Noiseless mechanism eliminates the nerve shattering clatter common to many models. *An aid to better work because it allows clear thinking, reduces fatigue, improves accuracy.* This typewriter disturbs no one, for it is almost impossible to hear it operate a few feet away. You get all features of an Underwood PLUS Noiseless typing.

FIRST CHOICE OF TYPISTS

OVER 5,000,000 UNDERWOODS NOW IN USE! Recognized as the finest, strongest built! Here is an office size Underwood with late modern features that give you SILENT TYPING. Has all standard equipment—keyboard, 2 colors, back spacer, automatic reverse, tabulator, etc. THERE IS NO RISK! SEE BEFORE YOU BUY ON MY 10 DAY NO OBLIGATION TRIAL PLAN. If you wish, send the machine back at my expense.

INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCHANGE

231 W. Monroe St., Dept. 436 Chicago, Ill.

EXTRA VALUE!

ROLL-A-WAY SECRETARIAL
TYPEWRITER STAND



Two Wings.
Correct
Working
Height.
All Metal.

Mounted on
casters,
can
be moved by
touch of
finger.

For those who have no typewriter stand or handy place to use a machine, I make this special offer. This attractive stand that ordinarily sells for \$4.85 can be yours for only \$2.00 extra added to your account. Quality built. Note all its convenient features. (SEE COUPON)

NO MONEY DOWN 10 DAY TRIAL Easy Terms-9c A DAY

No obligation. See before you buy on wide open 10 day trial. Pay no money until you test, inspect, compare, and use this Underwood Noiseless. Judge for yourself without hurry and without risk. When you are convinced that this is the biggest typewriter bargain you have ever seen, then say, "I'll Buy." Send only 60c a week or \$2.50 a month until term price of only \$35.85 is paid. Try it first, enjoy a full 10 days' steady use. THERE IS NO RED TAPE OR INVESTIGATION—MY OFFER IS EXACTLY AS I STATE IT.

2-YEAR GUARANTEE

I back this machine with my personal 2-yr. guarantee that it is in A-1 condition in every respect—that it will give first class service. Over 30 years of fair dealing and my 200,000 satisfied customers prove the soundness of my golden rule policy and prove that dealing direct with me saves you money.



Complete Course in Touch Typing

A complete home study course of famous Van Zandt Touch Typing system.

Learn to type quickly and easily. Carefully illustrated. Written expressly for home use.

MAIL COUPON NOW • Limited Quantity on Sale!

INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCHANGE, Dept. 436, 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.
Send Underwood Noiseless (P. O. B. Chicago) for ten days' trial. If I keep it, I will pay \$2.50 per month until easy term price (\$35.85) is paid. If I am not satisfied I can return it express collect.

Name Age

Typewritten signatures not acceptable.

Address

City State

CAUTION—FOR QUICK SHIPMENT GIVE OCCUPATION AND REFERENCE.

☐ Check for typewriter stand (\$2.00 extra). Stand sent on receipt of first payment on Underwood.



The lively, husky,
he-man flavor of Wrigley's
Spearmint Gum is fun
to chew.

And daily chewing
aids digestion...helps
brighten your teeth.

Buy some today.

The Flavor Lasts